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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to bring to the reader an understanding of Venezuela's educational patterns, needs, and development within the framework of the country's economic and social situation. Much of this report is devoted to historical backgrounds --to cultural development, politics, immigration, economics, and international attitudes-- to give meaning to the facts of its educational situation. Attention is called to the numerous problems which face the educator and the government. Along every rung of the educational ladder, from the preschool on up through the university, challenges arise in all directions including the administrative, financial, curricular, and philosophical. In the final chapter, the author criticizes some phases of educational policy, educational philosophy, or the lack of carefully thought-out and balanced educational philosophy. Educational development is seen as a problem in social psychology. (SBE)

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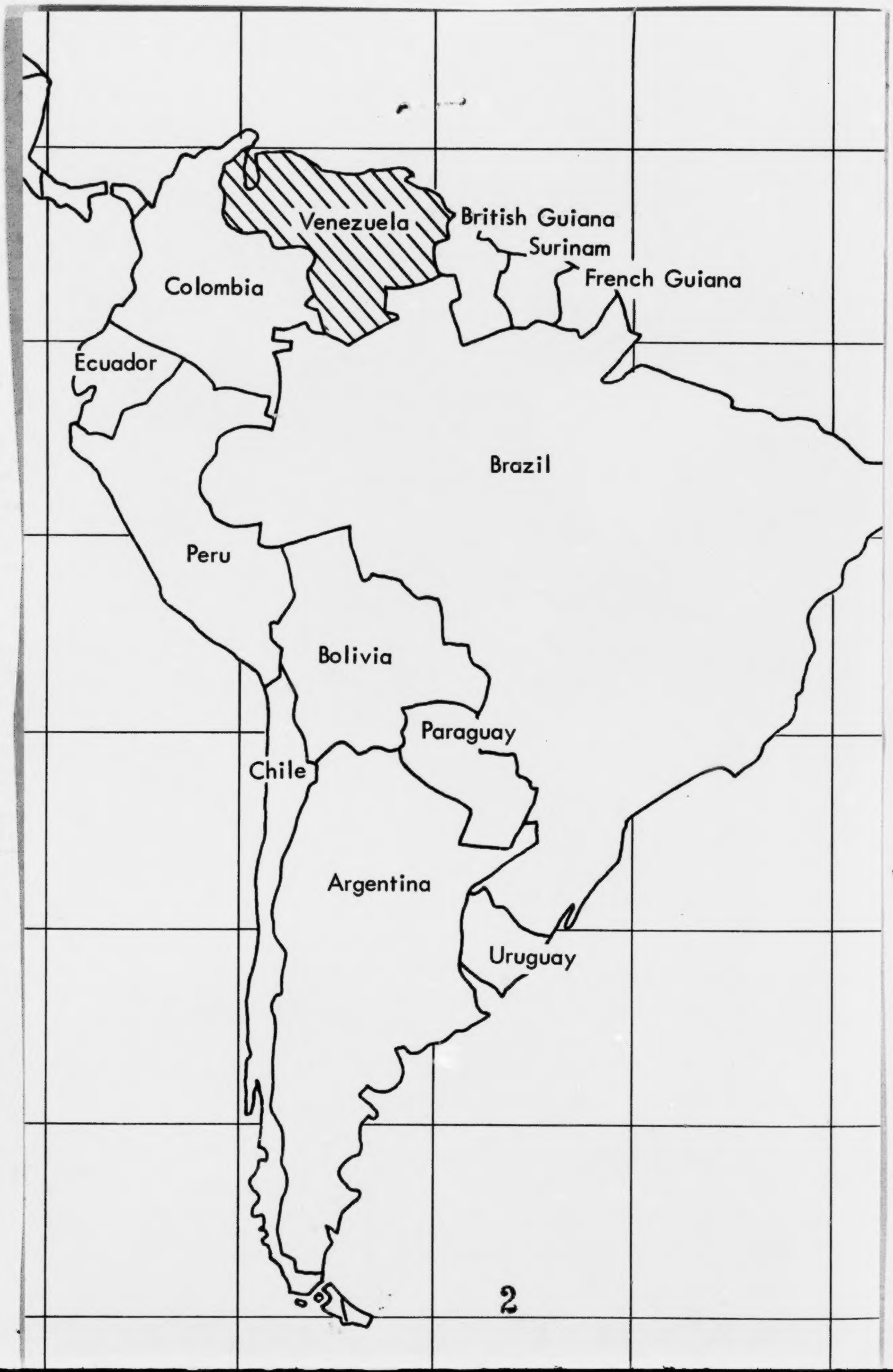

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The Development of EDUCATION in VENEZUELA

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Foreword

The present study is one of the regular series of Office of Education bulletins presenting salient features and analyses of the educational systems of other countries. Such studies in the field of comparative education are designed to serve educators, educational institutions and organizations concerned with the planning and conduct of programs in educational exchange, educational development of various countries; and other educational purposes.

This study on Venezuela deals with one of the Latin American republics faced by major problems in its educational development. Education is recognized, for example, by the Alliance for Progress as one of the areas requiring major attention if the countries of Latin America are to meet their national development goals and the expectations of their citizens for a better life. The present study, therefore, aims to bring to the reader an understanding of Venezuela's educational patterns and needs, within the framework of the country's economic and social situation.

This bulletin was prepared for the Office of Education by a longtime specialist in Latin American education who writes with particular authority on education in Venezuela. His knowledge stems from his personal perspective of 25 years' close association with and observation of educational development in that country. Dr. Sanchez was first invited to Venezuela in 1937 to serve as General Technical Advisor to the Ministry of Education and as Director of the newly formed National Teachers College, in the educational reform program which was Venezuela's first attempt at "revolution by education." He served with this program for a year, and since 1940 has been Professor of Latin American Education at the University of Texas.

Dr. Sanchez returned to Venezuela in 1961 to gather material for the present report. He has explored many facets of the history of Venezuelan educational development, from the colonial period to the present, and has observed closely matters not normally within the scope of an educational survey or overview.

This study, then, in considerable measure is a reflection of opinion by the author as well as a review of recorded facts. While references on salient sources of the study are listed in the bibliography, no such documentation can be offered to support the writer's personal observations. Such conclusions on his part therefore are not necessarily those of the Office of Education.

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Preface

In December of 1935 occurred the death of Juan Vicente Gómez, one of the most ruthless and tyrannical of the several dictators which Venezuela has suffered intermittently from its very inception as an independent nation to the overthrow of Marcos Pérez Jiménez in 1958. In Latin America, few dictators in history can rival Gómez, "The Catfish," in his tyranny, in his complete disregard for the well-being and progress of his people, in his brazen appropriation of the national treasury. For a quarter of a century, Gómez held Venezuela as his private fief—a fief where there was no law but his law, no rights but his rights. Throughout that period, independent thought, private initiative, and anything but absolute subservience to the dictator was deemed subversive and punishable with prison and death. The jails were full of political prisoners—the *Rotunda*, Caracas' bastille, was a favorite penitentiary for those suspected of thinking along unapproved lines—and thousands of Venezuelans chose exile in many parts of the world to the brutality of life at home. Seeking exile, itself, was treated as a very serious crime.

Dictatorships in Latin America, as in some other parts of the world, have seldom been noted for their concern for the education of the masses, and the Gómez regime was no exception. A few statistics will reveal the sad state of education in Venezuela even 1 year after the death of Gómez, and after important reforms had taken place.

The school-age population (7–14 years) numbered 493,237, of whom only 149,143 (less than 35 percent) were enrolled in schools, and it was officially estimated in the following year that only 20,000 were in regular attendance. The national illiteracy rate exceeded 80 percent. That this figure was probably based on a minimum definition of literacy is indicated in the further fact that 76 percent of the school enrollment was in the first grade, with only 2,185 children reaching the sixth (last) grade of the elementary school. In a country with inordinately high cost of living, elementary school teachers were being paid 150 bolívares (about $45) per month, and the Director of the largest secondary school in the nation (the "Andrés Bello" in (Caracas) received Bs. 620 (about $207) per month. More than 90 percent of the elementary school teachers had only an elementary education, or less. Secondary education was limited to the very few; and it, too, suffered from poorly prepared teachers.

These data will be given a closer look later in this volume. They are presented here only to underline the fact that in Venezuela, a compartively wealthy country, popular education was virtually nonexistent in 1935. Juan Vicente Gómez, whose arrangements with the oil companies provided the major part of the government's revenue, did not see fit to allow any substantial portion of the nation's wealth to find its way into schools, or into any other institutions of social rejuvenation

It was into this setting that this writer was projected in 1937 when the then Minister of Education, Dr. Rafaél Ernesto López invited him to Venezuela to serve as *Asesor Técnico General* (General Technical Advisor) of the Ministry and as *Director* of the newly created Instituto Pedagógico Nacional (National Teachers College). Dr. López had just taken over a reform program that had been inaugurated immediately after Gómez' death. Dr. López, who had escaped into exile in his youth, had established a successful medical practice in the United States. He was a man of tremendous energy and enthusiasm, with a seemingly inexhaustible source of ideas for the rapid improvement of education in his native land. It is unfortunate that he served as Minister of Education for just a couple of years, and that he and some hunting companions were lost in an airplane flight over the southern jungle of Venezuela a few years ago. His efforts in 1937 and 1938, and those of his predecessor in 1936, constituted the first attempt at "revolution by education" in Venezuela. That revolution was only partly successful; and, even that partial success received what was almost a death blow with the reinstatement of dictatorship under Pérez Jiménez in 1948, a dictatorship that was to last for almost 10 years.

The new revolution by education, that of the Rómulo Betancourt Administration inaugurated after 1958, was a scant 3 years old in 1961. It, too, faces enormous obstacles and challenges. In 1958, as in 1935, education virtually lay prostrate, trampled by ruthless dictatorship. As in 1935, a wealthy nation awoke, groggily, in 1958 to find that its heritage had been squandered, that its government, while affording the most fantastic of material constructions, had not permitted itself to afford a defensible program of education for its people. Upon returning to Venezuela in 1961, this writer, as in 1937, conferred with dedicated Venezuelan educators who today address themselves to essentially the same tasks as did their fellows of that earlier date. A good many of these had participated in the earlier attempt at revolution by education; and it was gratifying to learn that, after the passage of many years, some of my old associates were still active or were key figures in Venezuela's new endeavor.

In 1937, Dr. López enlisted the help of a veritable foreign legion of educational specialists to help him in the reform of education in Venezuela. As chief technical consultant and as head of the national teachers college, this writer had a polyglot staff of German Jews who had fled Hitler's madness, of Spaniards who had escaped from one side or the other of the violence in their homeland, of North Americans (as persons from the continental United States are known in Latin America), of Cubans, and so on. In the contingent from the United States were several Puerto Ricans, all of whom served with distinction. These men and women were dedicated educators, and I do not recall feeling disappointment over the contribution of any one of our educational foreign legion.

In 1961 I was surprised, most agreeably, to learn that Dr. Reinaldo Leandro Mora had recently been elevated from *Director General* of the Ministry of Education to its Minister. Dr. Mora and I had started our acquaintanceship back in 1937 in Venezuela, had renewed it in Mexico in the 40's. As Minister of Education, he received me simply as an old friend and placed at my disposal the resources of the Ministry. This study would not have been possible without his more than generous cooperation.

Dr. Mora decided that I should use as home base the *Oficina de Planeamiento Integral de la Educación* (Office for Overall Planning of Education) whose chief was Dr. Olinto Camacho, a former student of mine at the *Instituto Pedagógico Nacional* in 1937-38. Among my most fortunate associations in 1937 were those with two refugee Spaniards—one a Basque, the other a Catalonian. The Basque, a specialist in elementary education, was Dr. Gabriel Loperena Erro. The Catalonian, a specialist in literature, was Dr. Pedro Grases, today one of the most distinguished scholars and writers in Venezuela. The former is a successful businessman there, whose business (books) enables him to engage in that which he has always loved best, the pursuit of knowledge. These two old friends made my earlier work in Venezuela especially interesting, my more recent one sheer joy.

It is not possible to acknowledge fully the courtesies, the cooperation, the very special efforts of all of those without whose help a study of this sort would have been impossible. I think now of the Creole Foundation, and of its director, Dr. Alfredo Anzola Montauban, and of his associates. I think, too, of Professor Lorenzo Monroy (now Director General of the Ministry), of Dr. Jorge Durán, and of Dr. Raúl Osorio, of Maracaibo, who did so much for me in that city.

While Venezuela is *suis generis* as a nation, and while the facts should speak for themselves in a portrayal of education there, still it must be kept in mind that Venezuela exists in a context that reaches beyond its boundaries and beyond recent time; and that dates, records, and statistics are not all of the facts, nor necessarily the most important. The historical and cultural antecedents of modern Venezuela go far in giving meaning to the cold facts of its educational situation; and the meaning and significance of cold facts, and their very relevance, is determined by the value system, the perspective from which they are judged. We know, for instance, that Venezuela under Pérez Jiménez went through a period of unprecedented prosperity, of spectacular material growth. It is easily demonstrated that the *venezolano* (the *criollo*) did not keep pace with all of this progress, but must it be inferred that this was so for lack of capacity?

In seeking to find answers to such questions, this writer has found it indispensable to devote much time, and space in this report to historical backgrounds—to cultural developments, politics, immigration, economics, international attitudes.

This last area is one wherein the facts are elusive, where the range of opinion is wide, where at least a little bit of the truth is to be found at every point along the range of difference. It was in this area where my good friends and colleagues in Venezuela were of particular help. It was here, also, where taxi drivers, hotel maids, and shoe-shine boys unwittingly added their bit in shaping this writer's views. Businessmen, little and big, educators at all levels, government workers from the lowly to those in high places * * * from all of them, as known 25 years ago and on my recent visit, have come my convictions.

In 1958 Venezuela took a new road towards the future, a road based on democratic processes. As in 1936, after the death of Gómez, so in 1958, with the fall of Pérez Jiménez, the country looked to education for national redemption. The reforms since 1958 augur well for the future of this revolution by education, which has been directed by energetic men of competence and of goodwill. The national administration is committed to democracy, and to the important role that education must play in a progressive democracy. This writer, with a personal perspective of 25 years in depth, is hopeful that now it can be said truly that the Venezuelan, through education, will soon see his release from the tyranny of ignorance, of neglect, of apathy, and of being a second-class citizen in his own land.

George I. Sánchez.

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PART I

BACKGROUNDS

CHAPTER I

The Country—Its History

VENEZUELA, the land of orchids and black gold, was discovered on August 1, 1948, by Christopher Columbus on his third voyage to the New World. Thus, it was on Venezuelan soil that the European explorers of the 15th century first landed on the mainland of the Western Hemisphere. The exploration and the colonization of this fascinating land began soon after with the founding of a settlement on the island of Cubagua off the northeastern coast, in 1500. The settlement and exploration of Venezuela are still in process today, for this is not only a vast land: It is a land where mountain, jungle, plain, and river—and the extremes of heat and cold, of humidity and aridity—have resisted successfully the encroachment of man. An area of more than 352,000 square miles, the size of Texas and Oklahoma combined, Venezuela has a population of some 7½ millions concentrated in the northwest. There remain large, sparsely populated and largely unexplored regions to the south and east.[1] So, more than 460 years after its discovery by Columbus, Venezuela is still a frontier for the explorer, for the settler, and as we shall see, a frontier, too, and a spectacular challenge for the educator.

Geographically, Venezuela divides itself into four principal regions. The Andean highlands, running from the southwest in a northeasterly direction, rise to elevations of more than 16,000 feet above sea level. Through a large part of the Andes the climate is temperate, though in the upper reaches extreme cold prevails. The coastal plains, and the Lake Maracaibo basin, are hot and humid. However, because of the oil industry in the Lake Maracaibo area, and because the northern coast has the principal seaports, these hot and humid regions join with the highlands in having the highest concentration of population in the nation, something like four-fifths of the total population of Venezuela. This means that the other two regions, the Guiana Highlands and the *llanos*, or plains, that lie south and east of the mountain ranges of the Andes and north of the Orinoco River, and the Guiana Highlands, south of the Orinoco, are very sparsely populated. The Guiana Highlands constitute about half of the national territory, and the *llanos* one-third. Much of the former lies virtually unexplored, and the latter is devoted to cattle ranching in vast land-holdings. This plains cattle country is one of great variety, crisscrossed and drained by many rivers, with extensive forests, and it has a spectacular wealth of plant and wildlife. The Guiana Highlands, are a great plateau of 2,000 to 5,000 feet elevation, with some mountains rising to 8,000 feet above sea level. This plateau promises much for the future of Venezuela, because of the wealth and variety of its natural resources—minerals, forests, climate, variegated plant life, streams. The *llanos*, too, seem destined to much more intensive exploitation, the cattle industry making way rapidly to both small- and large-scale farming activities. So the era of discovery, of exploration and settlement in Venezuela is not yet over. Most of this land of orchids and black gold is still a frontier, a challenge to the future.

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[1] All four cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants, in addition to the capital, are west of Caracas: Maracay, Valencia, Barquisimeto, and Maracaibo.

The events that have transpired between 1500 and 1961 give meaning to the cold facts that portray institutional development and social progress in Venezuela today. The geographic and economic factors that have undergirded or frustrated development and progress must be reckoned within an assessment of the current scene, whether as to education or as to the state of popular wellbeing. Of great significance, also, are the political developments. So, in trying to understand education in Venezuela today, it is imperative that we seek to understand these intimately interlocking factors that make up the background, out of which the facts of the here-and-now have arisen and which gives meaning to those facts.

Spain and the Colony

The Spain that discovered the New World in the 15th century, that settled a large portion of her discovery during the 16th century, and that held her settlements there until the 19th century was a country of baffling contradictions. There is indisputable evidence that would support almost any characterization of imperial Spain—characterizations that would range from the most favorable and flattering to the most unfavorable and derogatory. One can support the position that the 16th century was a glorious page in the history of Spain; that in the midst of her Golden Age Spain bestowed gifts of unparalleled value upon her American colonies; that the principal criticism which can be directed at her efforts in the New World is not that she did not do enough good, but that she attempted to do too much. Or, one can support the position that, during that period and later, Spain's actions were motivated by crass and selfish considerations. One may look upon imperial Spain as truly humanistic and humanitarian, or as materialistic and imperialistic, in the worst sense of both terms.

It is important that the facts offered in support of either side be placed in proper perspective with respect to time—to the value systems that belong to each stage of time—and to the comparative adherence to those value systems by other nations similarly situated. To judge the events of the 16th century by criteria that belong in the 20th century would violate logic and common sense. To expect from one society high-level behavior that no other society of its time manifests may be a noble aspiration; but it is not justice to condemn that one society for falling short of the mark, or for behaving as all its contemporaries behave. Then, too, there is the fact that what was true of a given society's role in one circumstance need not be true necessarily in another circumstance — even though both circumstances are in the same time period.

All of this is by way of saying that imperial Spain, in the 16th century and later, should not be judged off-hand in terms of what took place in isolated or particular circumstances, but, rather, that Spain, in the New World, should be judged by the totality of its contribution. Making this admonition specific, and putting it conversely, Spain's action in Venezuela should not be regarded as her standard operating procedure; and, by that very token, we should not charge off the depressing inauguration of Venezuela as a colony of Spain to some sort of blight inherent in Spanish culture or policy.

Columbus wrote glowing reports of the land that he discovered in 1498. Among other attractions, he mentioned the gold ornaments and the pearls worn by some of the natives. The discovery of Lake Maracaibo by Alonso de Ojeda in 1499, and the establishment of the first settlement on Cubagua in 1500, were motivated by the quest for pearls and for gold. Ojeda, impressed by the villages which the natives built on stilts over Lake Maracaibo, named the land "Venezuela," (Little Venice). The coastal waters proved productive of pearls, and the slave traffic, upon which the pearl harvest depended, caused a settlement to be established on the mainland in 1520 at what is now Cumaná. However, Venezuela lagged far behind New Spain and Peru as an attractive and valuable colony of Spain; and the Crown manifested comparative indifference to what transpired in its first mainland colony in America. Pearl production soon fell off, the mainland was inhospitable, the Indians rebellious, and the gold of *El Dorado* was not forthcoming. Venezuela was a disappointment to Spain.

Charles I of Spain had borrowed large sums from a German banking firm to promote his election as Emperor (Charles V) of the Holy Roman Empire. This debt he paid off in 1528 by giving the bankers, the Welsers, the right in perpetuity to colonize and develop Venezuela. While required to promote the conversion of the Indians, the Welsers were also authorized to enslave rebellious natives. Lasting a little less than 20 years, the administration of the Welsers was characterized by indomitable dedication to exploration and organization, brutality towards the native population, and laying bases for the establishment of settlements from Coro, in eastern Venezuela, to Bogotá in present Colombia. The Welsers' custodianship was so undesirable, however, that in 1550, after a few years of successive administrative reforms, Venezuela again came under the complete jurisdiction of the Crown.

There is little to commend the Spanish Crown in the early colonial years in Venezuela unless it be the contributions of those truly heroic men, the clergy of the Catholic Church and the *conquistadores*. In the exploration and settlement of the country, from the steaming jungles to the frigid peaks of the Andes, along the coast and on the *llanos*, these men of Church and State accomplished deeds of spectacular proportions. It is true, of course, that their activities at times brought about the extermination or enslavement of parts of the native population. It is true, too, that motivation was not always commendable in terms of the value systems of later years. Still and all, inhospitable land was colonized; the natives, for better or worse, were largely incorporated into newer and more modern ways of life and amalgamated with the newcomers from Europe and from Africa to form a new people; and, in the last analysis, the foundations were laid for the development of a worthy member of the family of nations in the Twentieth Century. Placed in the proper perspective of time and of the applicable criteria, it may be that the misgivings felt will fade into the background, when one reads of the crass deal of the Crown with the Welsers, of the mistreatment of the Indians, of corruption and greed—and that the ultimate accomplishment will qualify the judgment that is levied against those events. In any case, it would be ignoring the facts of history to fail to give credit for the contributions of the colonial pioneers, clerical and military, who laid the foundations for progress in Venezuela under extremely unfavorable circumstances.

The early colonial period in Venezuela did not come up to the standards that were being established in the contemporary developments in New Spain (Mexico). There, education, for example, was a major phase of the development of the colony. Schools for Indians, colleges, universities, the printing press, books in native languages, and the like were ordinary expressions of a concern for the autochthonous and *criollo* (New World-born Spaniard) population and its place in the culture of the colony. There, Pedro de Gante, Juan de Zumárraga, Vasco de Quiroga, to say nothing of political leaders like Antonio de Mendoza and the Velascos, sought the development of that colony through the development and the protection of the native population. In Venezuela, the effort was at a much less ambitious level. This may have had justification in the more "primitive" level of the Indian cultures, it may have been because of the relatively lower capacity of the European personnel assigned or attracted there, or it may have reflected simply the fact that Spain favored New Spain over Venezuela. The fact remains, the early colonial period of Venezuela does not measure up, by far, to that of New Spain. As an illustration, while the printing press of New Spain was turning out books well before the middle of the 16th century, the first book was not published in Venezuela until 1810.

As elsewhere in Spanish America, the development of Venezuela as a colony of Spain soon became a tedious process of economic exploitation in the interests of the Crown and of the favored few. As we shall see, Venezuela was no exception to the general rule that the native population, and the *mestizaje* (persons of racially mixed origin), were thought of primarily as an economic resource, to be used to the best advantage of the privileged vested interests. One way of depicting the material growth of the colony is by reciting figures on population growth: Caracas, founded in 1567 by Diego de Losada had a population of 2,000, 10 years later. By 1696 this population had grown to 6,000 and in 1774 it was almost 19,000. In 1809, on the eve of the revolution for independence from Spain, the population of Caracas was still estimated at essentially that same figure, though some dependable sources place the figure at 50,000 by 1812. An interesting development is suggested in some estimates which place the Indian population of Venezuela at 500,000 at the time of the voyages of Columbus—yet, Humboldt estimated that in 1800 the total population was 780,000. This suggests the importance of *mestizaje*, of which more will be said further on.

Another indication of growth is found in the statistics on exports. In 1599, for example, the principal export was flour—some 36,000 kilograms—with hides, native cloth, and other minor products in addition. Venezuelan exports totaled half a million pesos per year in the 17th century. By contrast, during the last half of the 18th century, exports amount to something like 2,000,000 pesos per year. Cacao soon became a principal export, and by 1800 it represented a third of the value of all exports. The cultivation of coffee, inaugurated in 1784, by 1800 accounted for almost one-sixth of the value of all exports. Thus, prior to the discovery of oil in the 20th century, Venezuela's growth hinged on products of agriculture and ranching—cacao, coffee, indigo, cotton, hides, cattle and horses.

All of these facts and figures suggest that colonial Venezuela was poor and backward. None of the sources of revenue called for anything more than menial services from the laboring classes. Large numbers of workers were needed, but only a very few enjoyed the benefits of the profitable export traffic. Slavery and serfdom, or close approximations thereto, with their concomitants of ignorance, ill health, and hunger, became the lot of the general populace.

Independence—Its Promise

In retrospect, then, one can appreciate the fact that for Venezuela, as for most of Spain's other American colonies, the time was ripe in the early 19th century for rebellion. Spain was a decadent nation, politically, economically, militarily, and culturally. From the heights of the 16th century, from the achievements of the Southern Renaissance, from the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, the enlightened *reyes católicos*, or Catholic rulers, as they are known in Spain, that country had regressed to such an extent that Simón Bolivar could write in 1814 that the situation of Venezuelans was so bad that there was nothing similar in any civilized country. Spain had regressed to crass ineptitude in its kings and governors, to despotic administration, to the most arbitrary and unfounded economic restrictions, and to a materialism that was in the sharpest of contrast with the humanism and humanitarianism of its Golden Age. The economic restrictions, as Bólivar noted, inevitably forced Venezuela to become simply a country of ranches and plantations. Spain's political policies reduced the Spaniard who was born in the colonies to a position secondary to that of the Spaniard from Spain. Worse still, the mother country's political and economic policies had reduced the great mass of the people of Venezuela—slaves and free men alike, Indian, Negro, and the various combinations that made up the *mestizaje*—to such an oppressive state that all that was needed to set off the conflagration of rebellion was the spark of leadership.

The spark of leadership was there—among the most privileged of the Venezuelans, among those who stood to lose the most if rebellion failed, or even if it succeeded. It is estimated that out of a total population of approximately 800,000 there were 200,000 "white" Venezuelans in 1800, including a further minority of some 500 families who formed the Venezuelan aristocracy, and constituted the ruling class, outside of government. They owned the plantations and the ranches. Descended from the early *conquistadores*, these Venezuelans resented the secondary position that they had to play to the Spaniards from the Iberian Peninsula, and they were bitter over the restrictions put upon their economic activities by the mother country. They were rich and powerful, well educated and widely traveled. With a fine tradition of initiative and of conquest, they were fully capable of initiating a revolution. Virtually excluded from positions of governmental trust, from the highest levels of the clergy, and from the commanding posts in the military, these sons of the *conquistadores* chafed at these discriminations and dreamed of the day when they could overthrow the privileged Spaniard and rule Venezuela themselves.

Indispensable to a successful rebellion was the support of the popular masses, of the slaves, Negro and Indian, and of the free peasants, most of whom were of a mixed parentage which made them a blend of European, Indian, and Negro. As already noted, in 1800 it was estimated that only 200,000 of the total population of 800,000 was considered "white." That is to say that 75 percent of the population was either Indian, Negro, or mixed. An estimate has it that in 1812 there were 72,000 Negroes and 400,000 mulattoes in Venezuela. This would seem to indicate that the Indians and the Spanish-Indian mixtures numbered some 130,000. Another estimate puts it this way: 1 percent Spaniards (from Spain), 25 percent *criollo* (Venezuelan-born Spaniards), 8 percent Negroes, 15 percent Indian, and 51 percent mixed.

Much has been said on the subject of the enslavement of Indians in the American colonies of Spain, and there seems to be a great deal to support even contradictory points of view and overall conclusions. The records are very clear that large numbers of Indians were enslaved, that the traffic was a highly profitable one, and that even the Crown looked upon the trade in Indian slaves as a valuable source of revenue. On the other hand, it is also quite clear that, very early in the colonial period, the Indian became a subject of the Crown and, therefore, could not be enslaved. Rebellious Indians, however, became slaves when captured; and those Indians who were held in slavery by other Indians could be bought and sold by the Spaniards. These loopholes in the law could be, and undoubtedly were, exploited and enlarged as need and opportunity presented itself to the colonists. Then, too, the conversion of Indians to Christianity, their "reduction" to sedentary communities, the *repartimientos*, and the *encomiendas*, all with their recognized virtues and benevolent aims, were often a guise for the exploitation of cheap labor and for a kind of serfdom that differed little from, and that often was worse than, slavery. So, in one way or another, the Indian of Venezuela, except for the groups in remote jungle and mountain areas, gravitated to slavery or quasi-slavery. And as he lost whatever freedom he may have had in pre-Colombian times, he lost his identity as an Indian to become one component in the formation of the ultimate "*criollo*" of his native land.

Common as the enslavement of Indians may have been, it did not supply adequately the labor needs of the Spanish American colonies. In Venezuela, Indian resistance, Indian inability to withstand the rigors of the labors placed on his shoulders, and Indian susceptibility to the new diseases—these and other impediments made him a poor labor source. Then, too, he had dedicated champions among the Spaniards, especially among the clergy, who challenged his exploitation by the colonists. Their efforts soon made it difficult and unpopular to carry on the outright enslavement of Indians on a large scale, or at least sufficiently large to meet the demands for slave labor. Too, some of the defenders of the Indian sought his release from slavery by recommending that the Negro be substituted for him. So, as a consequence of all of these developments, it is not surprising that thousands of Negro slaves were brought to Venezuela in each of the three colonial centuries—probably totaling around 100,000. Thus the "*pobre negro*" became, like the Indian, another component in the birth of the ultimate "*criollo*" of Venezuela.

Whatever may have been the exact percentages by racial classification, it is evident that the great mass of the people of colonial Venezeula came from population groups that were regarded as at the lowest level of humanity, as extremely primitive and fit subjects for enslavement. They, in turn, slave or free, hated the Spaniards. This was particularly true of the *pardos*, the free mulattoes who, on the surface, were subservient but who awaited opportunities to rebel against the privileged whites. It was to these dissatisfied masses that the aristocratic families had to look for support if their rebellion against Spain was to have any hope of success. That support was not forthcoming until, in the last years of the 18th century, there arose from among the leading families of Venezuela a small group of brilliant and persuasive leaders led by the youthful Simón Bolívar, the Liberator.

There is no need here to go into detail in tracing the course of the War of Independence in Venezuela. The deeds of Francisco de

Miranda, of Simón Bolívar, and of their many distinguished fellow Venezuelans who engineered and carried to successful conclusion the rebellion against Spain can be studied in numerous sources. It is to be noted again, however, that their success was built upon the support of the miserable and discontented Venezuelan masses—that had sprung largely from Indian and Negro antecedents; from peoples regarded as "primitive;" from people in the main who were, or whose antecedents had been, slaves. These masses, on the *llanos* or along the coast, on the plantations or in the cities, would henceforth have to be appeased or held in tightest control. The oppression of three centuries would not be forgotten readily, and the successful rebellion against Spain might inspire other rebellions led by chieftains with less noble purposes than those of Miranda, of Bolívar, of Sucre.

The significance of the historical-cultural antecedents of modern Venezuela should not be underestimated in the evaluation of present-day events. The significance of the composition of the population, of the power structure that developed after independence from Spain was attained; and the signifiicance of the failure of government to make any major improvements in the disadvantaged state of the majority of the nation's population in 150 years of independence; and the significance of the fact that Bolívar's dreams were shattered at the very dawn of independence—these facts must not be taken lightly in an appraisal of Venezuela today. It is very important to recognize, for example, that in 1940, in a total population of 3,580,000 Venezuelans, 100,000 were Indians, 100,000 were Negro, 380,000 were "white," and 3,000,000 were of mixed racial origin. That is, nonwhites constituted 89 percent of the total population. This fact is mentioned not because "race" *per se* has any significance, but because, when the status and treatment of peoples regarded as of inferior "race" or class has put those peoples at a serious disadvantage over a long period of time, and no adequate measures have been taken to compensate for that state of disadvantage, the "race" or class-apart factor has meaning of far-reaching significance.

The disadvantaged masses in Venezuela continued to be disadvantaged. Independence from Spain did not bring for them the expected relief from oppression, from misery. The struggle for power among the several factions of the new ruling classes found the common man simply a pawn in the uprisings, in the manipulation of political forces. That common man's past had not prepared him for the full exercise of his newly found rights or for the proper discharge of his newly acquired responsibilities. He was highly vulnerable to the wiles of self-seeking politicians—the oligarchs, the *caudillos*. He was incoherent and ineffective when faced with political deceit; he was at the mercy of his leaders. The new nation was too poor to underwrite reforms on the very large scale called for by its needs.

The political power struggle was so intense and chaotic that recourse to arbitrary dictatorship became the common solution. The tradition of dictatorship was well established in the 19th century. It carried over into the 20th century, and was exemplified in all of its worst features by the régime of Juan Vicente Gómez in more than a quarter of a century that ended with his death in December 1935. That tradition had frustrated the high hopes of Bolívar, of Miranda, of Bello, and of all those other great *criollos* of the early 19th century. They had envisioned a land of freedom, a land where the high ideals of the French philosophers—Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, and their fellows—and the example of the revolutionaries in the former English colonies in North America were to bring new life, new hope to the Venezuelan. That tradition of dictatorship had annulled the promise of independence.

CHAPTER II

The History of Education[1]

(1498-1935)

JUST AS THE DEVELOPMENT of education in the United States of America cannot be fully understood without some understanding of its precolonial antecedents in Europe, so any study of the development of education in Venezuela should be prefaced with an examination of *its* precolonial European antecedents. And, just as educational developments in the United States have been, since the earliest days to the present, closely related to what went on in Europe—in England, in France, and in Germany—so European developments, particularly those in Spain during Venezuela's colonial period, have made their influence felt in education in Venezuela. It is not proposed to make a detailed analysis of these educational inter-relationships in this report on Venezuelan education. Still, it is important to note some of the salient features of the educational situation in Spain prior to her discovery of America; and to recognize that, throughout the colonial period, what took place in Venezuela reflected in some degree educational thought and practice in Spain. The projection of all of this into the 19th and 20th centuries provides an essential perspective in understanding education in Venezuela today.

Note must be made of the fact that, in the 16th century, Spain was enjoying the finest fruits of her Golden Age in virtually every field of human endeavor. The interaction of many cultures on the Iberian Peninsula over many centuries had reached its finest expression in art and industry, in law and science, in literature and government, in military science and exploration, in education. From the time of the prehistoric Iberians on to 1492, peoples from many and diverse origins—Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths, peoples of Jewish faith, followers of Mohammed, Christians—had been building Spanish culture and its institutions, and they are indelibly impressed with the mark of those contributions.

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[1] Grisanti, Angel, *Resumen Histórico de la Instrucción Pública en Venezuela,* Segunda Edición (Editorial Iqueima, Bogotá, 1950). See also: Antonio Arraiz, *Historia de Venezuela,* Tomo primero (Fundación Eugenio Mendoza, Caracas, 1954). pp. 280–284.

Spain's debt to her variegated cultural heritage was clearly expressed in her pre-Colombian educational institutions and endeavors. To the Roman and Visigothic interest in education had been added a very strong influence for formal schools by the coming of the Sephardic Jews. The need to teach the sacred language, Hebrew, to Jewish children made necessary the formal organization of the teaching function. The subsequent arrival of the Mohammedans in the 8th century brought to Spain ideas and practices in education from afar; and it also brought there the complete works of the writers of Greece's Golden Age. Very early after the Moslem invasion, copying centers were established in Spain, where scholars from many parts of Europe came to study and copy these Greek works. All of these events gave impetus to education and to advanced educational thought.

Considering the importance of Arabic to the Mohammedan, of Hebrew to the Jew, and of Latin and Spanish to the Christian, it is not surprising that the significance of language to education was a matter of particular concern. And it is understandable, then, why the first Spanish grammar was written so early (1492) by Nebrija. It is understandable, too, why the first great European champion of the use of the vernacular for basic education should have been Juan Luis Vives who was born, interestingly enough, in 1492.

The University of Salamanca, founded early in the 13th century, was one of the great universities of the Middle Ages. Other institutions of higher learning, such as that of Alcalá, began flourishing soon after the founding of Salamanca. All of these institutions contributed mightily in preparing the men of the Golden Age and in furnishing the thinkers—clergy, government officials, and teachers—for the New World.

The Colonial Period

Spain's earliest contributions to education in the New World are not shown to best advantage in Venezuela. For that, one needs to study events in New Spain and Peru. As one examines education in New Spain in the 16th century, for instance, it is difficult not to be profoundly impressed by the developments. The establishment of a school (1523) for Indians immediately after the overthrow of the Aztec Empire in 1521, in which the instruction was in the language of the pupils (Náhuatl), is a spectacular achievement. The development of that school and the establishment of the first institution of higher learning in New Spain for its graduates, a college for Indians in 1536, are developments that are impressive indeed. A recital of the other institutions and of their accomplishments, and of the men associated with them—men like Pedro de Gante, Alonso de la Vera Cruz, Juan de Zumárraga, Bernardino de Sahagún, Antonio de Mendoza, Vasco de Quiroga, and a host of others—who were far ahead of their time in the field of education, would take many pages. Suffice it to say again that events in Venezuela do not show Spain's educational efforts in the New World off to best advantage.

For more than 60 years after the discovery of Venezuela, the only education offered its inhabitants was in the rudimentary efforts of the missions. It was not until 1560 that the first school was established in Coro. This school, and subsequent educational efforts by the clergy, limited its curriculum to the study of Spanish grammar, morals, and the rudiments of Latin. Such education was offered only to those of the most privileged class, for it was not deemed at all desirable to educate others. As a matter of fact, as late as 1796, the city council of Caracas addressed itself to the king urging that education not be offered to the *pardos*, as that would cause this mulatto population to aspire to a status to which it was not destined. What little education a small fraction of the masses obtained was limited to Christian doctrine, first letters, and elementary arithmetic.

The first civilian school in Caracas was established in 1591. Its one teacher was paid 50 *pesos* annually, roughly the equivalent of $70. The next year, Simón de Bolívar, an ancestor of the *Libertador*, obtained permission from the Crown to have established an institution for the teaching of Spanish grammar in Caracas, as well as a seminary. The latter, the *Seminario Tridentino*,[2] was not fully functioning until 1664, with classes in philosophy, theology, and grammar.

Shortly before the end of the 17th century, the leaders of Caracas began asking for the establishment of a university there, but it was not until 1721 that Philip V saw fit to give his permission. The university was officially inaugurated on August 12, 1725, with the title of Royal and Pontificial University of Caracas (today the *Universidad Central de Venezuela*). It offered courses in theology, canon law, philosophy, and grammar. In 1763, the study of medicine was added, but not until after independence was it more than a verbalistic course—without illustration of anatomy, without the rudiments of surgery, without botany and chemistry, and without even one clinical course. Mathematics had to be studied under private tutors. In 1810 the university enrolled 400 students.

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[2] A *seminario tridentino* in Spain and her colonies was a college founded on the bases laid down by the Council of Trent which met in Trentino, Italy, between 1545 and 1586 to resolve problems of ecclestiastical doctrine and discipline. Prior to the Council of Trent, prospective clergymen obtained their education in the regular colleges and universities. The Council decreed that, henceforth, clergymen had to be trained in colleges created in connection with each cathedral church (the seat of a Bishop). These colleges, or seminaries, came to be known as *seminarios* or *colegios tridentinos*.

Advanced education elsewhere in Venezuela was limited to colleges in the largest towns, notably Mérida and Maracaibo. These colleges, even more so than the university in Caracas, had a very narrow scholastic curriculum. As a matter of fact, at the turn of the 19th century, the Spanish Crown (Charles IV) took a very dim view of the spread of education in America. This is evidenced, for instance, by his refusal to allow a printing press in Venezuela. Nevertheless, in 1808 (more than 250 years after the arrival of the printing press in New Spain) the English printers, Mathew Gallagher and James Lamb, set up the first printing press in Venezuela.

In sum, then, education during the colonial period was skimpy, verbalistic, scholastic, and limited to a very small sector of the population. In the face of the overwhelming evidence to this effect, however, one must keep in mind that the dominant families were wealthy, resourceful, and ambitious. Through private tutors, through travel, through small private classes, and through the surreptitious study of proscribed works, they not only kept abreast of developments elsewhere in the world but they generated a most distinguished leadership. Men, imbued with the most advanced ideas that circulated in Europe and in the United States of America in the latter part of the 18th century, sprang up simultaneously in Caracas, Cumaná, Mérida, Maracaibo, Barquisimeto, and other Venezuelan cities. These men were the products of an education that cannot be assessed by a tabulation of the existing schools or an evaluation of their curricula. Simón Bolívar had distinguished company in military affairs and in statesmanship. So did Andrés Bello in letters. So did every great leader of the period of independence have distinguished company. It is remarkable that so many highly educated and able leaders should arise out of such an unpromising educational situation. It would be interesting, indeed, to analyze the education of each and to try to determine the elements by which the aristocracy supplemented the very limited education offered by the colonial schools and produced Francisco de Miranda, Simón Rodríguez, and all of those others who forged independence and who left indelible marks in so many fields of intellectual endeavor.

Educational Thinkers[3]

One is accustomed to think of the period of the Venezuelan struggle for independence from Spain in military terms, or in those of political science and political philosophy. Closely affiliated with those phases of the movement for independence, however, was a deep concern for the reform and extension of education—a concern shared by a remarkably large number of the leaders among the *criollos;* men who saw in the education of the past a principal cause for the poor state of affairs in Venezuela, and who proposed educational reforms for a brighter future.

Chief among the critics of colonial education was Miguel José Sanz, born in Valencia in 1756. A highly educated man, he was widely read in the prohibited literature that dealt with philosophy, politics, law and letters. Around 1800 he prepared a report on public education which was a scathing condemnation of the existing schools, and which proposed basic reforms. He was especially critical of the schools for their superficial verbalism and for their failure to give attention to agriculture and to the mechanical arts. In fact, he denounced those schools for breeding in the minds of their students a disdain for useful work. This criticism is still a valid one more than 150 years after his report, for these are principal weaknesses in Venezuelan education today. In addition, Sanz was deeply convinced that the educational process should have continuity and coherence and that education was the decisive factor in moral progress, and the logical means for the development of wise politicians and clergymen and of virtuous citizens.

The most tireless crusader in the cause of education was Simón Rodríguez, who succeeded Sanz as tutor of Simón Bolívar.[4] Born in Caracas in 1771, Rodríguez lived a long, full, and highly varied life, dying in Peru in 1854. He was a school teacher who, early in his career, became thoroughly dissatisfied with the state of education in Venezuela as well as with Spanish domination. Forced into exile for his part in revolutionary activities, he spent time in Jamaica, the United States, Spain, France, and Austria. Later he accompanied Bolívar on a visit to Italy. He traveled widely over all of Europe, he knew Turkey, and even directed a school in Russia. This remarkable educator, through his studies and his travels, was convinced that the transformation of America would have to be based on public education. A strong believer in the educational theories of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Rodríguez became both a profound thinker in the realm of educational ideas and a dynamic man of action in both education and politics. He tried in every way to teach Simón Bolívar according to the ideas set forth by Rousseau in the *Emile:* excursions to the country, horsemanship, races in the forest, swimming—everything aimed at giving the youth, who was to become the tremendously versatile *Libertador*, an education "according to nature."

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[3] Virgilio Tosta. *Ideas Educativas de Venezolanos Eminentes,* Segunda edición (Ediciones Villegas, Caracas, 1958).

[4] See Emilio Vásquez, *Simón Rodríguez* (Tipografía "La Cultura," Ica, Peru, 1952). Also: Pedro Grases, *Los Escritos de Simón Rodríguez* (Ediciones de la Sociedad Boliviriana de Venezuela, Caracas, 1953).

Rodríguez had deep convictions about the political function that was involved in education, and he had very advanced ideas as to methodology, and motivation. He was firm in his notion that education had to be objective, and that a broad scientific education at the upper levels would produce governors who would appreciate the need to extend elementary education—for, he believed, only a learned government would make education general, for enlightenment in government would compel the spread of education. A remarkable educator, whom Bolívar characterized as the "Socrates of Caracas," Rodríguez is too little known in the United States, too little appreciated in Venezuela and elsewhere in Latin America where he worked tirelessly in numerous posts and institutions.

Almost a quarter of a century ago, this writer received profound satisfaction out of living for a few weeks in the annex of the *Pensión Ibarra*—where, in 1781, had been born Andrés Bello, Venezuela's most distinguished man of letters and one of Bolívar's tutors.[5] In writing briefly of the educational thinkers of the days of Venezuela's independence from Spain it is impossible to avoid the use of superlatives; for the men involved were, indeed, superlative. Andrés Bello was a humanist par excellence, and his educational theories are based on the belief that letters and sciences, properly cultivated, will result in social progress. His instrumentalism in education blends beautifully into the broadest concept of humanism. Bello believed in the social function of higher education, in the university as a live and lively center, where studies that enhance the finest qualities of the human being give birth to measures for social betterment. He believed that the educative process is an integral one; where science and letters are blended for the attainment of the highest enlightenment which, in turn, as a natural consequence, would result in the greatest social good. He was a champion of popular education and, like Sanz and Rodríguez, gave importance in the curriculum of the popular school to natural sciences, mechanical arts, and agriculture. Acclaimed throughout the Spanish-speaking world, Bello is venerated in

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[5] For a learned examination of his humanism see: Pedro Grases, *Andrés Bello, el primer humanista de América* (Ediciones del Tridente, S.A., Buenos Aires, 1946) and Pedro Grases, *Doce Estudios sobre Andrés Bello* (Editorial Nova, Buenos Aires, 1949).

Venezuela and in Chile. In the latter country he founded, and was the first rector of, the University of Chile. A man learned in sciences, in the arts, and in letters he wrote classic authoritative works on poetry, on grammar, on philosophy, on civil law, and on edcuation. He died in 1865.

With Sanz, Rodríguez, and Bello as his tutors, it is not to wonder that Simón Bolívar should have had very advanced ideas about education.[6] He was born in 1783 in Caracas. His father died when Simón was only 3, and his mother died 6 years later. The family was wealthy, with a long tradition in the colonial aristocracy, so Bolívar received his education in private classes and under guidance of his private tutors. Their teachings gave him an abiding faith in the value of education, both in the development of the individual and in the attainment of highest levels for the society. He believed that popular education was the first and most basic responsibility of government, for education he regarded as an indispensable condition to the exercise of political rights by the citizen. Time and again he underlined the need for parents to keep their children in school to the point to where, at the very least, they would be literate. He emphasized the need of education for girls; for, he noted, on them rests responsibility for the education of the family. Then, too, he gave every encouragement to the reform and expansion of education at the university level. The rejuvenation that took place at the *Universidad Central* after 1827 owes much to the ideas and to the generosity of Simón Bolívar. Would that the exaggerated hero-worship accorded the memory of the *Libertador* could have found expression long ago in honoring his proposals in the field of education. But that was not to be in his lifetime, or for more than a century after his death in 1830. He died a betrayed, bitter, and sad man.

Much less known, but no less significant in the realm of educational ideas and actions than those of such eminent figures as have been mentioned briefly above, are those of other eminent Venezuelans—some collaborators, some succesors, to Bolívar, Bello, and the others.

For example, José María Vargas (1786-1854) was an educator and a statesman of high caliber. He had traveled widely in Europe, had done postgraduate studies there, and he was chosen by Bolívar in 1827 to be the rector of the *Universidad Central*, in which he undertook a program of expansion and modernization. Later, as President of his country, as Director of Public Instruction, as a university professor, and in other public posts he was a tireless champion of free public elementary education and of the improvement of higher education. Dr. Vargas' efforts in behalf of Venezuelan education in the early years after Independence were eminently sound and farsighted. Along with Vargas as one of the great educational thinkers of those early years, one could mention Fermín Toro, Cecilio Acosta, and others.

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[6] See Armando Rojas, *Ideas educativas de Simón Bolivar* (Autores Venzolanos Ediciones Edime, E. Sanchez Leal, Madrid, 1955).

Achievements: 1810–88

As already noted, education during Venezuela's colonial period was extremely limited and ineffectual. The Crown was not well disposed to the spread of education among either the *criollos*, and even less so, among *pardos* and other free members of the lower classes. In the latter reluctance, the *criollos*, as a general rule, concurred. Nevertheless, the *criollos* were constantly exerting pressure for increased educational privileges for themselves and some of them were genuinely convinced as to the need for popular education. Then, too, the underprivileged classes aspired to the advantages that many of them saw were based upon education. As the colonial period was coming to an end, various expressions of awakening from the stupor of the preceding four centuries were to be noted.

The *Real Colegio de San Buenaventura* was founded in Mérida, in the Venezuelan Andes, in 1789. The curriculum included philosophy, theology, civil law, and canon law. An elementary school was added in 1796, and in 1801 its rector sought the transformation of the institution into a university. This petition was denied by Charles IV because, as he said, his majesty did not deem it convenient that learning should be diffused generally in America. Courses in medicine and music were added in 1805. In 1810, after the movement for independence had started, the Citizen's Committee of Mérida converted the institution into the *Universidad de San Buenaventura* (also known as the *Universidad de Mérida*), now the *Universidad de los Andes*.

Other colleges and seminaries were established during the same period. A College of Law was founded in Caracas in 1788. In 1827, the curriculum of the *Universidad Central* was revamped, particularly in the Faculty of Medicine. That same year an under office of education was established in the central government, with jurisdiction over secondary education, the provinces being given control over primary education. From the outset of independence, there was indecision as to the respective parts to be played by the central and the provincial governments in the administration of education. This indecision persisted until 1924, when complete centralization was instituted, though the Ministry of Public Instruction had been established in 1881 with the view towards the centralization and control of education by the national government.

The developments over the 60-year period, 1810–70, constituted important gains over the state of things at the close of the colonial period. First, the local and national governments took on much more direct responsibility for education, and there was genuine interest and effort in its expansion and extension. The predominantly ecclesiastical nature of the curriculum began to change rapidly towards knowledge of more secular significance, and more and more laymen entered a teaching profession heretofore dominated by the clergy. All of this advancement, particularly in extending education to increasingly larger numbers of children from the poor classes, is reflected in the issuance on June 27, 1870 of the decree which established free and compulsory (7–14) education. While politically unstable during this 60-year period, and plagued by numerous uprisings as well as by poverty, Venezuela did make an auspicious start in the establishment of the foundations of a national system of education.

The development of education in Venezuela during this period is summarized by Grisanti on pages 111–119 of his work cited at the beginning of this chapter. By 1870–71, 300 primary schools, with an enrollment of 10,000 pupils, were in operation. These numbers were sharply expanded once the central government undertook work in 1870 at this level. Between 1810 and 1870, in addition to a university at Mérida (1810), an academy of mathematics in Caracas (1831), and a seminary at Maracaibo (1816), there were established 20 public secondary and special schools, 20 private secondary schools for boys, and 6 private secondary schools for girls.

The decree of 1870 gave considerable impetus to the expansion of both public and private schools. The creation of the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1881 brought about the intensification of centralized control; but, as early as 1846, the principle of freedom of instruction (the right of anyone who felt so inclined to open a school) had been established, but with restrictions. Private schools continued to flourish with virtually no control or supervision by any governmental authority. In a country where there were few qualified teachers, this meant that the quality of education suffered. In 1914, the Gómez administration proclaimed a completely unrestricted 'freedom of instruction' which produced such chaos that in 1924 control of all education had to be vested in the central government. Nevertheless, there was substantial growth in the number of schools and in the total enrollment.[7] In 1870–72 there were 300 municipal (public and private) schools, enrolling 10,000 children in the primary grades; and in 1885–86, a total of 1,957 (1,312 federal and 645 municipal) schools with a total of 99,466 children. That is, in 15 years the number of elementary schools had more than quadrupled and the enrollment of children had grown almost tenfold.

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[7] Grisanti, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–132.

By 1889 there were in Venezuela 2 national universities, 1 national nautical academy, 21 national secondary schools for boys, 15 for girls, 21 private secondary schools for boys and 15 for girls, 7 Episcopal secondary schools, 3 national normal schools, 1 national academy of fine arts, 4 national vocational schools, 2 national schools for music, and 1 national school of foreign languages. At the elementary level there were reportedly 1,334 federal schools (with enrollment of 80,640), 334 municipal public schools (with enrollment of 11,272), and 311 private schools (enrollment 8,114). While these statistics are not entirely consistent and reliable, they do indicate a determined effort to bring about the spread of education in Venezuela before the turn of the 20th century, an effort of particular note in the light of the conditions within which the effort was made.

The Governments: 1829–1935

It must be remembered that Venezuela's revolution for independence was made possible by an uneasy alliance between a few dedicated *criollo* leaders and fellow *criollo* oligarchs and local *caudillos*, each of whom commanded a nucleus of followers among the masses—*pardos* and *mestizos*. Both the oligarchs and the *caudillos* were largely self seeking, and they could and did change allegiance as convenience dictated. The common people, the cannon fodder of the revolt, saw little to choose between the hated Spaniard and the equally hated *criollo*. For many, the only road of promise was that trod by the *caudillo*, wherever that might lead. Thus, the motivations behind the various elements involved in the wars of independence were highly varied and frequently inconsistent. While Bolívar and Sucre, and their colleagues with equally high ideals, had visions of liberty and justice under governments ruled by law for the common good, many of their associates, oligarchs and *caudillos*, saw freedom from Spain simply as a condition under which they would be free to seek wealth and power on their own terms.

Betrayed by such elements, the liberator saw his native land dash his hopes for a permanent Gran Colombia (union of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador). His trusted lieutenant, José Antonio Páez, that fierce warrior from Venezuela's *llanos*, was one of the first major defectors when, in 1829, he first usurped supreme authority in Venezuela and then led the country out of the Gran Colombia. This man, Páez, leading his *llaneros* (Venezuelan coyboys) as an illiterate *mes-*

tizo caudillo, unprincipled in many respects, went on to be both villian and hero of the early years of Venezuela's independence. He served his first term of office as President in 1830–35, under a Constitution to which he had been the godfather. Strangely, he was the only *caudillo* in Venezuelan history who respected government by law, and he was tireless and consistent in his defense of the Constitution. That Constitution vested power, of course, in the oligarchs, in the commoners whom the wars had enriched, and in the military.

At the end of his term, Páez supported a losing candidate as his successor, but peacefully turned office over to the victor—whom he later reinstated in office when dissident forces had sent the President into exile. Páez is known as the only Venezuelan strong man to allow the opposition to win an election, and the only dictator who did not rob the national treasury. He served another term as President in 1839–43. On seeking to overthrow President José Tadeo Monagas for his excesses, Páez was captured in 1850 and exiled. He was called back in 1861, to become the nation's dictator the same year. In 1863 he left Venezuela, and he died in New York 10 years later at the age of 83. Through his wisdom and prestige, in and out of office, he had held the country together for 20 years. The Marslands say, "He was the best president Venezuela would have for a long, long time." [8]

When Páez faded out of the political picture, Venezuela fell back into conflict and disorder. The struggle for power waged back and forth, with no government seeming to be able to control the forces of disaffection, of greed, and the machinations of the selfseeking. That is, not until Antonio Guzmán Blanco came along. The son of Antonio Leocadio Guzmán, a political opportunist, "Antonio Guzmán Blanco was his father's son, vain, dishonest, hypocritical and crazy for power." [9] He was a megalomaniac who, with a straight face, proclaimed himself "*Ilustre Americano y Regenerador de Venezuela*" (Illustrious American and Regenerator of Venezuela). Serving in various governmental capacities, his tricky financial manipulations made him wealthy and whetted his ambitions for even more wealth, power, and luxury. He was President of Venezeula 1870–77, in 1879–84, and in 1886–88. In the interims, he installed trusted subordinates to rule in his stead while he enjoyed life to the full in Europe. Throughout this régime, Guzmán Blanco presented a facade of liberalism and of respect for law. A "modern" dictator, he saw the need to give the appearance of benevolence and of concern for the public good. He backed various public works and education, while through silent and not-so-silent partnerships he profited handsomely from a large variety of governmental expenditures. Withal, his efforts in behalf of education were the most ambitious Venezuela had experienced, and the statistics cited earlier in this study so attest. While this is a credit to the reign of Guzmán Blanco, it needs to be kept in mind that infinitely more could have been done—and that what was done suffers in merit because of its motivations. In 1889 his political enemies were successful in destroying his power. He died in Paris, living in luxury, in 1899.

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[8] Marsland, William D. and Amy L., *Venezuela Through Its History*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1954. p. 188.

[9] *Ibid.* p. 189.

The retirement of Guzmán Blanco was followed by a comparatively respectable administration, that of Dr. Juan Rojas Paúl. However, he was succeeded by Dr. Andueza Palacios who, contrary to law, sought to succeed himself in office, with chaos resulting. This presented a grand opportunity to two extremely ruthless and unprincipled conspirators, Cipriano Castro and Juan Vicente Gómez. Both were in exile in Colombia for their parts in an earlier abortive revolution. Both *andinos* (Andeans) from the State of Táchira, both were steeped in the tradition of absolutism and that might makes right. Through audacious, even foolhardy bypassing of government forces, they managed to overcome all opposition and gained control of Caracas and the government. Their revolution, culminating in 1899, was to be the last successful one for 46 years, and it brought on the most repressive dictatorship in Venezuelan history, one that would last until 1935.

Cipriano Castro's administration, ineffectual and corrupt, was simply a prelude for that of Gómez. Juan Vicente served Castro slavishly, sparing no means to ingratiate himself with a President who, in his ineptness and pleasure-seeking, led Venezuela to virtually complete fiscal disorder and to almost constant war and national uncertainty. The 8-year Castro administration left Venezuela eager to embrace any successor who gave promise of bringing political and economic stability to the nation. The methodical, cold-blooded Gómez played his cards with utmost care and finesse so that, in due course, his planning and patience would make him that successor—for his own benefit. He carefully arranged to be left in command when Cipriano Castro had to go abroad because of illness; and, with perfect timing, Gómez took over the reins of government while the "strong man," Castro, was overseas and very sick.

In 1908 Juan Vicente Gómez became the undisputed dictator of Venezuela. The various *caudillos* endorsed his assumption of power, expecting to replace him with ease. The oligarchs saw in him a stupid peasant who could be bent to their selfish ends, or who could be easily supplanted with a puppet of their choice. How mistaken they all were. Juan Vicente Gómez had not lived a half century as a ruthless *caudillo*, by sheer lawlessness and daring, by the most careful and systematic dealing for his own power and wealth to be done out of the post on which, long ago, he had set his sights and had planned for carefully and with the utmost cunning. An uneducated peasant, this unprincipled *mestizo* knew what he wanted and took it—cattle, women, land, now the presidency. A lifelong bachelor, he is said to have had 97 sons, some of whom he recognized and provided for with the best that the country had to offer. "A peasant who spent the first 42 years of his life mastering an Andean farm, he "plowed" Venezuela until he died, uprooting every man, every moral, intellectual, or natural obstacle that stood in his way." [10]

Gómez was a shrewd manager and, though he had never been more than 20 miles from his birthplace until he joined the Castro revolt, he learned the ways of high finance and high level administration very quickly. By careful management he soon had the national treasury in the black, so much so that not only could he enrich himself and his cohorts, but could pay off all the national debts, which were many at the outset.

The discovery of oil before World War I, and its exploitation by British, Dutch, and American oil companies soon transformed the Venezuelan economy from that of a poor agricultural and cattle raising country to that of a wealthy owner of one of the world's greatest oil deposits. In 1918 production was 318,000 barrels per year, in 1921 it was 1 million barrels, 100 million in 1928, and 180 million in 1936. The national income doubled in the first 10 years after 1919. This sudden prosperity had a devastating effect upon the people, for the new wealth went neither into the alleviation of Venezuela's traditional ills—ignorance, disease, landlessness, abandonment, abysmal poverty—nor into the solution of the problems which the new economy created: slums, imigration, inflation, social disintegration.

There was no place in Gómez' scheme of things for social reform, for sharing with the common man the good things of the new life. He developed a professional army against which rebelling *caudillos* and other dissidents could not prevail, so there was no one who could offer a serious challenge to his backward and absolutist national policy. He was a dictator without scruples and without any sense of social responsibility, seeing government not as a means for national betterment but simply as a scheme for the support of his selfish wants. He shared the loot with his followers, appointing them to positions where the public treasury could be used to their personal benefit, and throwing those who opposed him into the *Rotunda* in Caracas; or into the prisons at Puerto Cabello and Maracaibo, which bulged with political prisoners. After 27 years in absolute power, during which he operated Venezuela as though it were his private estate, Juan Vicente Gómez died in December 1935, at the age of 76.

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[10] *Ibid.* p. 212.

Education in 1935

The death of Gómez brought to light, for the first time, the sad state of affairs in the field of education in Venezuela. Heretofore, published reports were vague, misleading, unreliable. It was as though careful planning had gone into obscuring the true state of education in the country. It was only after Dr. Alfredo Smith took over as Minister of Education in the administration succeeding Gómez that credible statistics and appraisals appeared.[11] They revealed extreme neglect of education by the Gómez regime.

That a country, a comparatively wealthy country, could have fallen into such a condition is hard to believe. Even a very modest effort in the years following the establishment of the oil industry, merely the allocation of a minimum defensible share of the nation's wealth to the development of public education would have presented a vastly different and brighter picture in 1935. On the contrary, the schools were the hardest hit by the quarter century of corruption and demolition that Venezuela had suffered under Juan Vicente Gómez.

Note has already been made of the fact that, in 1935, less than 20 percent of the school age (7–14) population was in school; that more than 80 percent of the total population was illiterate; and that the literacy of many was largely rudimentary and nominal. Dr. Smith's report bitterly summarizes the state of elementary education:

> At least 80 percent of the population illiterate and, scattered throughout the country, abandoned to its illiteracy; a Ministry of Public Instruction deaf to all private initiative that might tend towards the cultural betterment of the Venezuelan people; all ideas for improvement frowned upon, and all independence of judgment or of action persecuted. The schools without furniture and instructional materials; the towns with exceedingly few schools; the teachers without any protection whatsoever and submitted to the saddest kind of routine since, for many years past, no study was given to the technical aspects of school organization and the schools were administered from the desks of the Ministry though no thought was given to the improvement of the teacher through vacation courses nor even by the work of the Technical Inspectors who were chosen by simple favoritism and without any thought to the formidable task which they have in the improvement of the teacher and, thereby, of the school.

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[11] Ministerio de Educación Nacional, *Labores y Proyectos para la reorganización de la Instrucción en Venezuela* (Cooperativa de Artes Gráficas, Caracas, 1936).

> Our primary school could be defined thusly: a teacher who was more or less competent or incompetent; small boxes, if not rocks, upon which to seat the pupils who lacked even a pencil and a tablet. As to methods, they were most varied, completely rudimentary, mechanical and memoritor in the main; and the teacher acted with the most absolute indifference, condemned to misery or to never advancing with recognition for useful work done and subjected to condemnation and discharge in the face of failure when he was not properly sponsored (pp. 3–4).

At the end of 1935 there were a total of 1,432 elementary schools in the nation, 1,225 of which were 1-room schools. Even after the addition of 694 schools (548 1-room) by the new administration in 1936, only 30 percent (149,143) of school-age children (493,237) were enrolled. It is significant that 113,755 of the total were in the first grade, attesting both to the efforts of the new administration to create more schools and to enroll more children, and also to the high early dropout rate prevailing before the reforms were started in 1936. In 1935, only 16,133 children were enrolled in the second grade, 8,102 in the third, 5,778 in the fourth, 3,192 in the fifth, and a pathetic 2,185 in the sixth grade. Almost 30 percent of those enrolled in the elementary schools were not in attendance. Coupled with the number who were not enrolled, this meant that more than 80 percent of the children of school age were not in school. In 1935 the nation spent less than $165,000 for this level of education.

Secondary and higher education were no better off. The *liceos*, *colegios*,[12] and universities were in the most precarious condition. They had virtually no laboratories or laboratory equipment. The teachers, by and large, were selected on the basis of the recommendations of provincial politicians, with little thought to professional competence. These schools, as will be discussed later, were centers of dissatisfaction against the tyranny of Gómez, and could expect little consideration from him and his henchmen. The student revolt of 1928 reveals that, though starved and oppressed, these institutions nurtured the seeds of revolt while extracting all possible sustenance from the meager educational diet allotted to them. The secondary schools (less than 20 public and a similar number of private schools) were manned by less than 200 part-time teachers: These schools had an enrollment in 1935 of 2,594, as compared with 297 in 1908. The inadequacy of this program is suggested by the fact that the new administration almost tripled the number of secondary teachers in its first year (1936), to make only very modest inroads into the great need that existed.

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[12] *Liceos* are academic secondary schools. When operated as private schools they are referred to as *colegios*.

Possibly no educational institution was so neglected as the normal school, responsible for preparing teachers for the elementary schools. While in the latter part of the 19th century there were four normal schools, in 1935 there were only two: the *Escuela Normal de Hombres* and the *Escuela Normal de Mujeres*, both in Caracas, both in improvised quarters, and both in a sorry state of neglect. Symbolic of their status is the fact that the *Normal de Hombres*, founded in 1912, graduated only 165 teachers in its first 23 years of existence, an average of 7 teachers a year. The principle of freedom of instruction, first applied in 1864 and given wide extension by Gómez in 1914, permitted anyone who was so moved to open a private school and teach. As noted, this resulted in such chaos that in 1924 the central government went to the opposite extreme, assuming complete control of all education and stifling private initiative.

But little improvement in teaching resulted, for the government did virtually nothing to prepare new teachers or to give inservice training to its mediocre teaching force. Even after 2 years of dedicated efforts to reform the old normal schools, to create new ones, and to raise the level of teaching by inservice training programs there were only 496 normal school graduates in the country, though 6,000 were urgently needed. While the supply of graduates has now reached the demand, the problem of upgrading teacher education at this level is still a critical one whose solution appears to be well in the future. With a long period of neglect in this sphere, and only partial and spotty rehabilitation in recent years, the normal school is still the problem child of education in Venezuela. The heritage from the regimes of Castro and of Gómez stigmatized teaching and relegated popular education to an equally low state. That heritage will take a long time to overcome. The elementary school was looked upon as an unnecessary expense, and its teacher was the most abused and the lowliest of public servants.

When Venezuela ended her three centuries as a colony of Spain it appeared that in developing her freedom she would rely heavily upon the school—education at all levels, education for all. The founders of the new nation assigned a vital role to the school in the forging of a fatherland. Sanz, Bolívar, Bello, Rodríguez, and other leaders believed that for a bright future Venezuela would have to depend heavily on enlightenment—of the governed, and even more, enlightenment of the governors. Though sorely troubled by internal instability and poverty, Venezuela made beginnings towards that end in the first half-century of independence that were not inauspicious, though far from adequate. The advent of corrupt dictatorships quickly dimmed the prospects envisioned by the liberators, then dashed them completely with the tyranny and ineptness of Castro and the greater tyranny and avarice of Gómez. The visions of the early educational thinkers of a Venezuela freed not only from the inhibiting hold of Spain, but freed, too, from the burdens of ignorance, were smothered in the miasma of the tyrants, and buried and discredited by governments that in monuments of paper and stone purported virtually to deify those thinkers. Yet the spark that Bolívar and his fellows kindled, the idea that good governments are based on freedom and that freedom is based on enlightenment, has persisted—in the halls of the universities, in the private councils of the intellectuals, wherever men talked of freedom. Surreptitiously, clandestinely, that spark has flared here and there, even in the darkest moments of Venezuela's history. The death of Gómez removed the principal obstacle to its full expression, and with his death we observe a nation seeking its redemption through education.

CHAPTER III

Release from Tyranny—The Challenge

JUST AS SPAIN, during the colonial period, could not prevent the Venezuelan *criollos* from seeking enlightenment, from reading proscribed works that dealt with advanced ideas as to values, governments, and the nature of man, so even Gómez could not completely obstruct the search for truth and freedom among the students of his day. Just as the *criollos* of the late 18th century—the Mirandas, the Bellos, the Bolívars—could attain enlightenment in the absence of schools, and could plot revolutions for independence, so the students of the second and third decades of the 20th century could make the most of the meager education available, and supplement it on their own initiative to nurture conspiracies for release from tyranny.

The young men and women in the secondary schools and in the universities of Venezuela during the days of Gómez could hardly help but observe the disparity between the ideas and the ideals inscribed in their textbooks and the intellectual climate which was the world of reality in their country. They could hardly help but contrast the hopes and aspirations expressed by the most idolized of the nation's founders, its revered heroes, with the sorry facts of life in Venezuela—facts of life that had no reason for being other than the tyranny of absolute dictatorship. Those young men and women could not forever remain silent, keeping their troubled thoughts to themselves and shunning a test of the criteria of truth. In 1928 they spoke out.

The revolt of 1928, sparked by the students of the *Universidad Central*, who were later joined by other students and by young army officers, was quickly put down. Many revolutionaries were killed, hundreds were thrown into the prisons, many went into exile. Though this revolt initiated several years of revolutionary activity against the

Gómez dictatorship, the brutal efficiency of the government's military forces was too much for the insurgents. Juan Vicente Gómez continued to rule, unruffled by the challenges to his might, until his death in 1935.

The Governments, 1936–58

It seemed, at first, that the death of the *Benemérito* (the "well-deserving," as Gómez liked to style himself) would bring little if any change in the administration of Venezuela. The new President, General Eleázar López Contreras, had been Gómez' Minister of War, and all of the important posts in government were filled by *gomecistas*. Merchants and minor public servants knew of no way of public rule other than that to which they had been forced to adhere by a long tradition of absolutism, where favoritism and graft were the order of the day. But López Contreras was not a Gómez, nor a Castro, nor a Guzmán Blanco. He sought to consolidate his power, and to unseat competing *gomecistas*, by seeking popular support. To this end, he opened the doors for the return of the exiles; he freed political prisoners; he lifted censorship; and, all in all, he gave every sign that he repudiated the old regime.

Whatever their intent, the reforms of López Contreras only whetted the appetite of a people who for long had been deprived of even a voice of protest. The exiles returned, among them many of the leaders of 1928 student revolt. The student federation that had sparked that revolt became vocal once more. There were general strikes, and it seemed in those early days that rebellion would break out in armed conflict, and that the new administration would fall. But López Contreras was no weakling. While carrying out the most advanced reform program that Venezuela had experienced, he did not bow to the pressure of any faction. He suppressed opposition parties, he exiled a few young politicians, and he fined or imprisoned those who demonstrated against his government. Concurrently, he inaugurated fundamental reforms in many fields of public endeavor—health, public works, education, economics. General Eleázar López Contreras, still living at this writing, as President was his own man, true to himself—and his code was, for Venezuela, moderately liberal. As an immediate contrast to the preceding 27 years of dictatorship, the 1935–41 administration was as the sunrise is to the darkest night. The López Contreras government left much to be desired, if one thinks in terms of enlightened modern governments. Yet the transition that it made in a few years from the long-imbedded tyranny and backwardness of Gómez to progressive governmental policy and programs of action, without revolution, entitles that government to a place of recognition and respect in history.

López Contreras supported his Minister of War, General Isaías Medina Angarita, to succeed him as President. The great novelist, Rómulo Gallegos, was proposed by Rómulo Betancourt, one of the rebellious students of 1928. The Congress, much under the control of the President, decided for Medina Angarita, who served as President during 1941–45. Medina Angarita was perhaps Venezuela's most liberal President prior to 1945. He allowed complete freedom of speech and of the press; he inaugurated basic agricultural and land reforms; he gave women the right to vote; he did not imprison or exile political opponents; and, in all, perhaps went too far too quickly in bringing Venezuela up to date as a modern nation. In any case, opposition to him developed from all angles. Even López Contreras, who had put him in office, took the political field against him. This split in the dominant group opened the way for a most unexpected coup, that of a small group of junior military officers, among them Marcos Pérez Jiménez, subsequently to become dictator. In October, 1945, the Medina government surrendered to them. They, in turn, surprisingly, installed Rómulo Betancourt as Provisional President and asked his party, *Acción Democrática*, to form a government.

Betancourt had belonged to the student federation which had attempted the 1928 revolt, and his party was far left of center, but not Communist. During the period 1945–48, the Betancourt administration instituted many changes in the Venezuelan government: a new, and very liberal Constitution, election of the President by direct popular vote, doors opened to European immigrants, government business enterprises, and various other fundamental departures which reflected the leftist nature of *Acción Democrática*. At the same time, the government took highly repressive measures against the supporters of preceding administrations, sending many to prison or into exile. Catering to the downtrodden masses, it fomented the spread of labor unions, and confiscated the property of the exiled supporters of earlier regimes. Its efforts to get into the good graces of the masses succeeded, as evidenced by the vote for Rómulo Gallegos, the *Acción Democrática* candidate for President in 1947. Gallegos polled almost 80 percent of the 1,100,000 popular votes cast.

Rómulo Gallegos was to last in office only a few months. The innovations of the Betancourt administration had alienated the support of many, and the military officers who had put it in power soon moved against his successor. The Gallegos administration quickly placed positions of power in civilian, rather than military, hands; and soon there was a split in the ranks of the revolutionaries—*Acción Demo-*

crática on one side and the military on the other. The government refused to accede to the demands of the latter, secure in the assurance of popular support. But the military leaders did not give the new Gallegos government time to consolidate its position and seized power suddenly on November 24, 1948. A military junta, composed of Carlos Delgado Chalbaud, Luis Felipe Llovera Páez, and Marcos Pérez Jiménez took over the administration from the deposed Rómulo Gallegos—and dictatorship came back to Venezuela for another 10 years. Venezuela's noble experiment in progressive self-government had failed, and the country reverted once more to absolutism.

The junta ruled the country until 1952, when Marcos Pérez Jiménez was named Provisional President by the armed forces. He stayed in power until January of 1958, when military and civilian opposition groups, with widespread popular approval, overthrew his dictatorship and set up still another junta. This junta, composed of three military officers and two civilians, promised to call free elections that same year. It released political prisoners, invited the return of the exiles, restored civil liberties and lifted censorship, and proceeded to set the stage wherein the several political parties, hitherto severely restricted, could contend for popular endorsement. Rómulo Betancourt, returned from exile, was the choice of his old party, *Acción Democrática*, long outlawed by the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship. In the December 1958 election he received 49 percent of the votes over his two opponents. Thus began another Venezuelan experiment in self-government, in progressive democracy.

Education: 1936–58

As already noted, the administration of Eleázar López Contreras constituted a repudiation of the policies of the government of Gómez. Nowhere was this more evident than in the field of education. During its first year, 1936, the new government increased the expenditures for primary education by 82 percent, to a total of Bs. 9,500,000. It created 694 new primary schools (of which 548 were one-room) to raise the total to 2,066, and added 1,178 new teachers. It contracted the services of a mission of Chilean educators to serve as technical consultants to the Ministry of Education and to organize courses in the field of teacher education. The two national normal schools, both in Caracas, in 1935 were in worse shape than even primary education. The new administration reorganized and expanded these two existing schools and made plans for new ones. It founded the *Instituto Pedagógico Nacional* (National Teachers College) to prepare teachers for the secondary schools, which it found in a deplorable state of neglect.

In 1935 there were 20 secondary schools, not counting the 2 normal schools, staffed by 188 teachers, with enrollment of 2,594 students. In its report for 1936, the government stated that there were 28 secondary schools with 462 teachers.

The government undertook important steps to stimulate technical and industrial education, working towards the establishment of several technological institutes of university level. It began the expansion of the universities, refitting their antiquated laboratories and initiating the move towards their autonomy. The *Universidad del Zulia*, in Maracaibo, was reopened. The government created a Department of Culture and Fine Arts in the Ministry of Education to administer the School of Music, the School of Plastic Arts, the National Library, the various Academies, the national museums, and physical education and sports. The López Contreras government spent more than 17 million *bolívares* (approximately $6 million) on public education in the fiscal year 1936–37. It devoted 55.7 percent to primary education, 8.95 percent to higher education, 7.54 percent to secondary education, 3.87 percent to technical education, and 2.7 percent to the normal schools. It set forth ambitious plans for the rapid and comprehensive expansion of education at all levels. The 17 million Bs. expenditure represented a little over 8 percent of federal spending for all purposes.

Early in 1937 a new Minister of Education was named, Dr. Rafaél Ernesto López, one of the exiled students. He had established himself solidly in medical practice in the United States where he had been very active in the association of fellow exiles from the dictatorship of Gómez. Dr. López was an enthusiastic administrator, generating ideas in rapid-fire order for the reform of education in his native land. He was shocked at the state in which he found education in Venezuela, even though substantial gains had been recorded in the year or so that the López Contreras regime had been in power. The 80 percent nonattendance by children of school age and the 80 percent adult illiteracy moved him profoundly. The almost complete absence of rural schools, of vocational education, and of adequate centers for the education of teachers challenged him to envision a vast program of educational reform. Less than 1 percent of the buildings in use were suitable for schools, most of them being former private residences for which the government was paying more than 1 million *bolívares* in rentals. Ninety percent of the primary school teachers had no normal school preparation, many having less than the 6 years of elementary education. The secondary school teachers had virtually no professional preparation, their employment was on a per-class basis, and only a handful of Venezuelans were technically qualified to hold posts of leadership in education. In his preliminary report in October, 1937, Dr. López stated:

> The Venezuelan school has consisted, generally, of an indifferently prepared teacher, of a generally inadequate classroom, and of a set of furniture that in the majority of cases lacks much in providing the minimum of comfort that is necessary to make even modestly possible the work of the school. The supply of books and instructional materials, looked after which such preference in progressive schools, had been abandoned and relegated to that resulting from the private initiative of the teacher, and the individual sacrifice of the parents.
>
> The result of this state of things is the almost total absence of instructional materials and reference works in the schools. Those children whose parents have some financial means acquire some textbooks, but the majority must be satisfied with the meager diet of explanations by the teacher. The gravity of the problem is accentuated in an environment like ours, where there are no satisfactory public libraries and where the book and the magazine are beyond the economic possibilities of our population. If to this state of things is added the deficient preparation of the teachers, the urgency of remedying the situation somewhat will become evident, if the large sums that are being paid for salaries, house rentals, and school furniture are not to prove somewhat less than unfruitful.[1]

The Minister addressed himself to the extremely grave situation by first making a coldly realistic appraisal of the total educational situation in his country. His preliminary study, referred to above, and his first Memoria[2] (official report) analyze and evaluate with penetrating clarity the facts of education in Venezuela as no reports had ever done before. Dealing as gently as possible with the harsh facts of deficiencies—in the teaching personnel, in the technical direction of education, in the minimal standards of sanitation, health, comfort, and welfare—he sought to persuade his Cabinet, the Congress and the nation that the large-scale reform of education was an enormous task; one which would take many years to accomplish, but which was the indispensable prerequisite to national wellbeing, security, and progress. While striving mightily to accelerate the institution of reforms—building modern school buildings, establishing new normal schools, inaugurating an extensive spearhead in rural education, providing for vacation and in-service education of teachers, raising salaries, and meeting a multiplicity of other extremely urgent needs—Dr. López recognized that these steps were simply part of the foundations of long-range planning.

It was his conviction that sound educational progress in Venezuela could come about only after years of careful planning and dedicated action that prompted him to seek professional help from abroad. Dr. López was a highly trained medical doctor, and he had high regard for professional specialization. While confident of his own judgment in nonmedical, as well as medical matters, he listened with respect to the professionals in other fields and was quick to adopt the new and advanced ideas in education—the cultural missions, the rural normal schools, and the "New Education" at the elementary level, etc. He persuaded some of the members of the Chilean educational mission, brought in by Dr. Alberto Smith the year before, to remain; and he proceeded to augment his contingent of foreign educational specialists from other countries.

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[1] Ministerio de Educación Nacional. *Plan de Trabajo* (mimeographed by the Ministry, Caracas, October 18, 1937).

[2] Ministerio de Educación Nacional, *Memoria* (Lit. y Tip. del Comercio, Caracas, 1938).

Specialists from Uruguay (elementary education), from Cuba (rural missions), from Germany (school architecture, audio-visual aids), from Puerto Rico (school administration, technical education, commercial education), and from the United States were brought in to help direct the urgent program of construction and reconstruction that was underway, and to direct the planning of the reforms to come. From the United States came two leaders in physical education (one a graduate of Cornell University, the other of the University of California at Berkeley); the specialist in parasitology (from Purdue University); and the *Asesor Técnico General* (General Technical Advisor) who was also the *Director* of the *Instituto Pedagógico Nacional* (from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, Chicago). It was in the latter capacity, as head of a veritable foreign legion of professional educators, and as chief of the *Sala Técnica* (Research Division) of the Ministry, that this writer had the most versatile, challenging, and impossible job of his life!

The *Sala Técnica* was made up of a representative of each of the department heads in the Ministry, as well as two foreign specialists—one, a refugee Basque, as *Asesor Técnica* in Elementary Education; the other, a Puerto Rican, as *Asesor Técnico* in school administration. There was everything to be done; everything was urgent; time was short, and experienced subordinate personnel was next to nonexistent. The foreign contingent in Venezuelan education was seriously handicapped by the attitude of the local educators who, understandably, resented having to take a subordinate place to outsiders—who were paid salaries that were disproportionately higher than their own.

It was probably this lack of *rapport*, and the failure to arrive at a meeting of minds, that prevented a more fruitful contribution of the foreigners. Still, Dr. López' quick adoption of the ideas of his foreign consultants generated action programs that channelled basic reforms in the right direction—in vocational education, in rural education, in the national teachers college, in physical education, in school construction, and in the development of curricula. His foreign advisers went much further in proposed reforms—the complete overhaul of the national system of examinations, coeducation in all schools, full-time teachers at the secondary and university levels, a more "practical" (less verbalistic) turn to all curricula, and so on. Dr. López (brave soul!) saw good sense in these proposals and experimented with their directions, but his efforts did not get beyond that exploratory and tentative stage. The opposition—the weight of tradition, the vested interests—was too much for major changes. It is heartening to read today the words of Dr. López with reference to a part of these proposals, written in 1938 but with equal application in 1961:

> It is no secret that the current organization (of schools) does not respond to the modern concept of education. Our school is essentially academic. It does not prepare the child or the youth for the exercise of civilian life. It limits itself to filling his mind with information, which if it has value at all, it is not the only value, nor, much less, the principal objective.
>
> In consonance with the system of teaching is that of examinations. In these nothing is required other than the repetition of that which is found in the tests. As a consequence, many students, most of them confiding in their memory, leave until the last day of school the acquisition of barest information.
>
> All of this organization we have to change. It is necessary to incorporate our nation into modern currents. This which we affirm is as applicable to the primary school as it is to the secondary or higher. The *Sala Técnica* has been working actively in the preparation of appropriate plans.[3]

How far the educational reforms of the López Contreras administration were moving is revealed in the 1940 report of the Minister of Education Dr. Arturo Pietri; who succeeded Dr. Rafáel Ernesto López.[4] By the end of 1939 the primary schools had increased 254 percent over the number in 1935. The school-age population enrolled rose from 19.9 percent to 41.03 percent in the same period. The budget for primary education was enlarged from slightly less than 6 million to almost 14 million *bolívares*, not counting the more than 8 million allocated to primary education by the states. Whereas in 1937, there were only 496 primary school teachers who were normal school graduates, there were 779 by the end of 1939. From 2 public and 1 private normal schools with 141 students in 1935, there were, in 1939, 5 federal normal schools and 14 private ones with a total of 1,105 students. In the field of secondary education, the growth had been from Bs. 510,230 to Bs. 1,613,760, and from 1,800 students to 3,497. A very telling comment from the *Memoria* of 1940 (pp. xii–xiii) underlines one of the basic failings in Venezuelan education, then and now:

> Many causes converge to frustrate, in part, the high mission of our secondary studies. Among them we could enumerate the short duration of the program

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[3] *Memoria*, 1938, p. xxii.

[4] *Memoria*, 1940 (Caracas, Editorial Impresores Unidos, 1940).

> and the defects of the curriculum, but there are certainly others of greater weight. Our system of studies has had, by uninterrupted tradition, a marked unilateral character. From the primary school up to the university there is a kind of continuous channel which denies to the pupil any efficient exit other than that of the liberal profession. This country—essentially agricultural, ranching, mining and seafaring by imposition of its economic reality and its human geography—in its system of education has never turned, in efficacious ways, towards preparing the human capital which those activities need. The men who could have gone to the country or to the crafts, with multiple aptitudes and clear sense, find themselves dragged, without any creative decision, to the Liceo and later to the University, or they remain among the discarded ones who then will try out, without previous guidance, any old job. The defect is an old one, and it stems from very old roots. Attempts have been made to correct it, in so far as current laws allow, by the creation of schools of arts and crafts and introducing agricultural work in the rural schools, but the effective reform would have to begin through a complete diversification of primary education—to the end that the school not empty itself completely in the Liceo. But, in the meantime, the current situation is taking to Secondary Education an increased contingent of nonvocational students who, in large part, fail or complete the cycle in a mediocre way, occasioning inumerable inconveniences, among which the grave moral and pedagogical decline of the level of education is not the least.

These words by Dr. Arturo Uslar Pietri, then Minister of Education, attain particular significance when it is recalled that he is a political scientist, and one of Venezuela's most distinguished writers of novels, short stories, and essays, and a man of wide experience in government and teaching. In criticizing Venezuelan education for failing to adapt to the realities of its environment, for being so completely academic and verbalistic, he was striking at its fundamental weakness—a weakness that today continues to retard cultural and economic progress. It is highly significant that Uslar Pietri is stating once again what Miguel José Sanz said in 1800, what Alberto Smith said after the fall of Goméz—and what his successor, Rafael Ernesto López, said. In fact, this is the conclusion of every serious thinker on Venezuelan educational problems, from the time of Sanz and Bolivar, Bello, and Rodrìguez on through the present, and it should be regarded as an imperative as education is reformed.

Considerable progress was made up to 1948, when dictatorship took over the nation again. Delia Goetz, in her report to the U.S. Office of Education, describes the situation as it was in the 3 years immediately preceding the fall of the *Acción Democrática* government.[5] Illiteracy had been reduced in 1944, to 56.9 percent. Education in 1946–47 was allotted 9 percent of the national budget. Enrollment in primary schools in 1945–46 had increased to 310,954 (from 136,106 in 1936); in secondary schools to 13,333 (from 2,594 in 1935); and university enrollments had reached 3,785 (from a little more than 2,000 in 1937). The enrollment in normal schools in 1945–46 was 2,781 (from less than 500 in 1935). Considerable attention was being given to the reduction of illiteracy, to the expansion of rural education, and to the growth of vocational education.

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[5] Goetz, Delia, *Education in Venezuela*, Federal Security Agency, Office of Education, Bulletin 1948, No. 14 (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1948).

Education received a serious setback with the reestablishment of dictatorship, under the rule of the military junta, of which Marcos Pérez Jiménez was the dominant figure (1948–52), and under Pérez Jiménez alone (1952–58). The growth of education was slow and laborious, with frequent setbacks because of the indifference and downright opposition of the dictator. This is suggested with telling force if one examines the statistics for the years between 1949 and 1958; that is, for that period of the dictatorship which did not overlap with the preceding or succeeding administrations.[6] In 1949–50, 51 percent of children of school age were in school. This percentage increased with pathetic slowness and in 1956–57 only 55 percent of these children were in school. While the number of teachers in governmental primary schools was increased by 2,341 during that period, there were 845 less public primary schools at the end than at the beginning! This in the face of the fact that there were 469,149 children without access to schools. The deterioration of this level of education in the public schools is pointed up by the rapid increase in private schools. These grew in number from 320 in 1949–50 to 1,000 in 1956–57, with enrollments rising from 53,301 to 103,826 during the period. As was the case with the Gómez dictatorship, the Pérez Jiménez government gave virtually no encouragement to the preparation of elementary school teachers. The number of public normal schools declined from 13 in 1949–50 to 10 in 1956–57, enrollment increasing by only 455 (from 3,181 to 3,636) in 8 years. On the other hand, the number of private normal schools increased from 14 to 62, and their enrollment from 1,026 to 4,061.

Secondary and higher education fared badly, too, during the decade of the 1948–58 dictatorship. There were 53 public secondary schools in 1949–50, and only 8 more in 1956–57; and their enrollments had grown from 16,415 to 28,742. Again, by contrast, the private secondary schools had grown from 62 to 236, and their enrollments from 6,921 to 23,678. The only area in which very modest progress was recorded was in technical education, with increased enrollment in the public institutions from 6,000 to 15,713, and in the private schools from 600 to 1,308. Considering the dire need of this kind of school in 1949, these gains are hardly a credit.

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[6] Ministerio de Educación Nacional, *La Educación en Venezuela, Año Escolar 1959–60* (Ediciones del Ministerio de Educación, Caracas, August 1960). Also: *Memoria*, 1959.

Students in general, and particularly the university students, were much opposed to the dictatorship and took every opportunity to make their opposition known and felt. As a consequence, the dictatorship retaliated with repressive measures of various kinds—instituting high tuition rates at the traditionally free university level; restricting enrollments by other measures; eliminating the autonomy of the universities; and, when these measures did not suffice, closing the *Universidad Central.* This persecution of higher education is reflected in the statistics for the years 1949–57, inclusive. At the beginning of that period there were 5,657 university students. That number declined to 1,671 in 1951–52, and then only gradually increased to 4,758 in 1952–53, and to 7,573 in 1957. As noted, the *Universidad Central* did not operate in 1951–52, owing to the fact that it had been closed by the government. The National Pedagogical Institute, the fountainhead for the preparation of secondary and normal school teachers was badly crippled in those 8 years. Its enrollment of 611 students in 1949–50, declined to an enrollment of 322 in 1956–57. The difficulties thrown in the path of public higher education by the Pérez Jiménez regime brought about the establishment of two private universities in Caracas: the *Universidad Católica Andrés Bello* (Catholic) and the *Universidad Santa María* (non-sectarian). These two schools enrolled 462 students in 1953–54, a number that had grown to 1,261 in 1956–57.

The Challenge

The above figures relating to the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez do not assume their proper significance if they are not projected against the background of population growth and economic development, and attendant social problems—to say nothing of international developments and the acceleration in technology in other parts of the world. This is not the place for more than brief mention of these backgrounds, but note should be made of the fact at least that Venezuela was extremely deficient in the field of education in 1948. Following the period of the Gómez dictatorship, the country was undergoing a population explosion of tremendous proportions, which doubled the national population between 1935 and 1959, and caused it to multiply 1.78 times between 1941 and 1959. It should be kept in mind that Venezuela's rapid population growth, at more than double the rate of growth in the United States, places a disproportionate percentage of the total population in the lower school-age brackets, while simultaneously producing a large imbalance in the productive labor force. For instance, whereas in the United States only 25 percent of the population are under 15 years of age, in Venezuela over 43 percent are in this age group.

The Economy.—It can be said that just to maintain education at the level of 1948, and assuming a normal rate of population growth, the number of students in Venezuelan elementary schools, for example, would have had to virtually double by 1957. The gains in enrollment noted above, therefore reflect not progress but the maintenance of the status quo in education, woefully deficient to begin with. Also, it should be noted that following the Gómez administration, and particularly during that of Pérez Jiménez, Venezuela underwent spectacular changes in its economy, demanding a highly increased level of competence among workers, which the schools of the nation were not fitted to provide.

Until the 1920's Venezuela was a country supported by exports of coffee, cacao, cattle, and a few other agricultural products; and by the business of importing and selling manufactured goods. The middle class was insignificant, and the people were divided in the main into the few who were very rich and the great masses who were desperately poor. But the revenues from oil introduced changes of great import. As mentioned earlier, oil production was only 318,000 barrels annually in 1918, rising to 4 million barrels annually in 1923, to 180 million barrels in 1936, and to almost 2 million barrels a day in 1952.[7] Not only did the direct returns to the government from the oil industry take a sharply increasing share of the oil dollars, but the gross and per capita returns to the oil workers in wages and fringe benefits took a steady rise year after year. The oil boom led to concomitant developments in other income-producing areas—for example: Construction, manufactures, commerce, and rents.

A comparison of the figures of 1959 with those of 1950 reveals the rapidity with which Venezuela's economy is changing.[8] The gross domestic product from crude and refined oil rose from 3,920 million *bolívares* in 1950 to 7,500 million in 1959, while that from agriculture, livestock, and fishing rose from 1,014 to 1,642. In 1959 the gross domestic product from the oil industry was over 28 percent of the total gross domestic product. It is noteworthy, also, that the gross domestic product from industrial manufactures rose from 783 million *bolívares* in 1950 to 2,703 million in 1959; and that while the amount from construction increased from 827 to 1,707 during the same period.

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[7] The daily average production for the first 9 months of 1960 was 2,863,900 barrels. (See: *Venezuela Up-to-Date,* No. 5, p. 8—publication of the Embassy of Venezuela, Washington, D.C.)

[8] For an excellent, detailed analysis see: *The Economic Development of Venezuela,* Report of a Mission Organized by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1961).

It is of interest that the gross domestic product from iron ore went from 20 million *bolívares* in 1950 to 420 in 1959, foretelling of the vast developments that the discovery of iron in eastern Venezuela have already begun to bring to the national economy. The exploitation of Venezuelan iron deposits by U.S. steel companies can be thought of as beginning with the arrival of the first shipment of Venezuelan iron ore in the United States in 1951.

These spectacular events in the development of the nation's economy have grave implications for education in Venezuela. It will take more than an illiterate population, and more even than a population that has only the rudiments of a primary school education, to exploit with sound profit the opportunities that the new-found wealth has brought. It will take more than a verbalistic education if the graduates of the middle school and those of the university are to fit successfully into the many posts of responsibility and leadership which the new economy offers and the new politics demand. It is detailing the obvious to specify that the new industries require workers who are more than literate—those industries that refine petroleum, smelt iron and steel, construct skyscrapers, build superhighways and railroads, and perform all those education-based activities which are the lifeblood of technological progress. It will take much more than the education of the past to put rural development into the proper place of responsibility that it should have in the new economy. The exploitation of Venezuela's extensive and rich soil, so long abandoned, cannot be neglected if the economy is to be a healthy one. All in all, Venezuela's economic revolution has far outstripped her accomplishments in the field of education. Because of this, the nation faces a real crisis, a ringing challenge.

Population.—The increase of population in Venezuela, and its movement, is illustrated best by the changes that have taken place in her largest cities, particularly in Caracas.[9] Caracas was founded in 1567 and, according to the census of 1869, it took three centuries to reach a population of 47,013. Then, in a course of 90 years, the city raced through a period of spectacular growth to 1,200,000 in 1959. This, in itself, does not tell the story adequately, for, in 1930, the city did not quite reach 200,000 in population—multiplying that figure six times in the next 30 years! That this caught even the population experts by surprise is attested to by the fact that, even in 1939, those experts were predicting that the city's population in 1960 would be only 500,000—with a predictable maximum growth of 1,000,000 by the year 2000.[10]

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[9] An interesting exposition of city planning in Caracas is set forth in *Acción sobre Caracas*, bulletin of the Centro Simón Bolívar, C.A. in 1960 (no publisher given).

[10] Arnoldo Gabaldón, *Inquietudes Acerca de la Educación en Venezuela*, Biblioteca Trujillana de Cultura (Ediciones del Ejecutivo del Estado Trujillo, Trujillo, 1959).

As a matter of fact, the metropolitan area of Caracas reached a population of 1,265,001, according to the census of 1961—whereas the figure was 693, 896 in the census of 1950.

What has happened in Caracas in population growth involves many factors too complex for analysis here. Over the nation as a whole, in addition to the highly accelerated rate of growth resulting from improvement in general health services and diet, and from immigration and like factors, there are two of unusual significance: the precipitate dash of rural populations into the cities, and the spectacular effects of the eradication of malaria upon rate of population growth. The first is attested to by the growth of Caracas between 1939 and 1959, and the growth of other cities, notably Maracaibo. On April 4, 1961, *La Esfera*, a Caracas newspaper, quoted the Governor of the Federal District as stating that, in the time elapsed since the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez, 400,000 persons have flocked to Caracas from every corner of the nation. The drastic changes in the nation's economy, briefly alluded to earlier, have centered nearly all of the remunerative occupations (with the exception of petroleum and iron ore industries) in the centers of population, and there followed the impoverished masses from the rural areas.

The population growth resulting from the eradication of malaria is a story of an accomplishment of heroic proportions.[11] When, in 1945, Venezuela undertook a wholesale antimalarial program it was undoubtedly the nation of the Western Hemisphere where malaria was most intense and severe. The persistent continuation of that program produced, in less than 10 years, the largest area in the world in the tropical zone where malaria had been eradicated. Before the program was inaugurated, the death rates attributed to malaria were 100 per 100,000 (the median for 1941–45). In 1950 the rate had decreased to a phenomenal 9 per 100,000; and, by 1958, it had reached the vanishing point at 0.1 per 100,000. This is one death in a million of population; that is 1/1100 of the deaths per million that occurred on the average in 1941–45.

The deleterious side effects of malaria—abortions, premature births, still births, and reduced fertility ratios, among others—had a highly depressing effect upon population growth. In some areas population development had been negative before the anti-malarial campaign; that is, the death rate exceeded the rate of live births! The latter rate for the nation as a whole grew from 35.8 in 1945 to 47.0 in 1954. That the anti-malarial program was not just coincidental is shown by the fact that, while the birth rates in the areas not involved in the program (they were not malarial regions) increased from 36.1 in

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[11] See Arnoldo Gabaldón, previously cited.

1942–45 to 41.7 in 1950, for those in malarial regions that were heavily protected by the program the increase in birth rate was from 35.5 to 45.7. All of this resulted, in 1950, in an increase in live births of 6,389 and a decrease in deaths of 13,473 from the previous year in the malarial regions of Venezuela. For that year alone, this accounted for an increase of almost 20,000 in the total population.

Another factor that needs to be taken into careful consideration, not simply because of the numbers involved but because of its corrollary significance, is that of immigration. The 1945–48 government of Rómulo Betancourt, and his *Acción Democrática* party, opened immigration to the economic refugees and the displaced persons of Europe. By 1948 the net gain from emigration and immigration of foreigners was 36,999. The net gain after that, from year to year, went from a low of 24,011 in 1951 to a high of 57,542 in 1955—with a decided drop to 15,865 in 1958. In the period 1948–59, the total net gain from immigration was 406,913.

Immigration has played a significant role in filling the need for trained personnel. Since Venezuela's population lacked the education, the skills, and the know-how essential to her economic development, the country had to rely on educated foreigners to fill that need. The immigration policies inaugurated in the 1940's were, in that sense, sound ones. However, if the native population was not to be elbowed out completely and permanently from jobs requiring more knowledge and skill than they then possessed, educational programs to provide that knowledge and that skill should have been inaugurated on a large scale at the same time. This, however, did not take place satisfactorily. It is no wonder, then, that both in Caracas and in Maracaibo the writer was reliably informed that around 75 percent of all business enterprises are reported to be in the hand of the foreign-born. It seems that even in such jobs as those of waiters and waitresses and maids in the better hotels, the non-native predominates. This, obviously, is an unhealthy situation, even on the assumption that the nonnative becomes a naturalized citizen of Venezuela in complete good faith, and looks upon the development of his new fatherland as a responsibility in which he has important share. Were one to assume otherwise, a continuation of this disproportionate reliance on the foreign-born for the necessary know-how would bode only disaster for the native and the country.

The significance of population growth in educational planning is obvious. However, reliance upon projected rates of population growth is hazardous at best, and one can attribute only suggestive significance to such rates as he seeks to anticipate future needs in schools and related public services. Gabaldón shows that, while the number of years required to double Venezuela's population was estimated at 38.3 in 1940, in 1945 it was 31.4; in 1950, 18.7; and in 1954, 16.9 years.[12] The significance of this calculation to Venezuela's schools is indicated by Gabaldón's estimates that, while in 1945 only 780 out of 1,000 born in 1938 were living (and were eligible for enrollment in school) 897 out of 1,000 born in 1963 would be eligible in 1970. Looked at differently, this rate of growth would mean that the school-age population (7–12)[12a] of 789,383 in 1955 would increase to 1,519,334 in 1970—almost doubling in 15 years.

Related Social Problems.—The challenges presented to Venezuela by her population changes and by the drastic changes in her economy are matched by the consequences of those events and by old ills that have been aggravated by them. We can touch only briefly on a few of those related social problems here, to suggest the broad front along which the educational program is challenged.

In 1954, the Marslands said:[13]

> Venezuela is one of the poorest nations in the world, not one of the richest despite its whopping national income of more than 7 billion bolivars annually and an average individual income of about 1,500 bolivars ($450) per year. This would be a very impressive figure if every man, woman, and child did receive $450 per year. Averages tell us nothing about distribution. How many millionaires and how many paupers does the figure include? One look at Caracas—with its streets of gleaming cars and hills of seamy shacks—yields an approximate statistics: Caracas certainly has more Cadillacs and probably more slums than any city of this size in the hemisphere. In 1949, 35 percent of the Venezuelan working force received nearly 80 percent of the national income; 65 percent of the working force struggled to make its 20 percent match a cost of living which had doubled since 1936. The hard truth is that with Venezuela's unbalanced distribution of her wealth, a disproportionate amount of her national income pays for mansions, luxury furnishings, expensive clothes, imported foods, and flashy automobiles. Since most of these things are brought from the United States or Europe, Venezuela's oil royalties find their way into the pockets of foreign rather than Venezuelan workmen, even though some of them pass through the Venezuelan workman's pocket in transit.

Other competent observers have been similarly impressed.[14]

Venezeula, the third largest petroleum producer in the world, has let little of the profits from her black gold filter down to benefit the masses of her people. A country that could have set the example for Latin America in sound modern development, with the consequent improvement in overall welfare of her people, it had done little before 1958 to solve its old or recent problems. Two percent of the landowners still hold 75 percent of the land, and 200,000 farm families produce barely enough to live on. It is no wonder, then, that the peasant has been drawn to the cities as by a magnet, only to fall from the frying pan into the fire—for he is less fitted, because of his ignorance, to succeed in the life of the metropolitan centers than on his distressingly small farm, assuming that he was among the fortunate minute minority that owned anything.

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[12] Op. cit., p. 32.

[12a] This refers only to the 6-year elementary school, not the legal school-age.

[13] Marsland, *op. cit.*, p. 260–61.

[14] Rubin, Morris H. "Venezuela and Colombia: New Outposts of Democracy," *The Progressive,* Volume 25, Number 6, June 1961, pp. 27–30.

The *ranchos* of Caracas, the slums that perch on hills overlooking the city, housing some 400,000 souls, represent a condition that also plagues other large centers of population. In these slums, and in the blighted areas both within the cities and in the country, there is marked social disintegration owing in large part to a casual attitude toward firm family ties and to failure in many cases to accept paternal and family responsibilities. This situation is evidenced, for example, by the fact that in 1961 there were in Caracas alone 120,000 boys under the age of 12 who had no home. The implications of this situation for social reconstruction and rehabilitation are obvious, and constitute a challenge to the school that has yet to be met.

The provisional government, set up when Marcos Pérez Jiménez was overthrown in January 1958, and was succeeded by the popularly elected government of Rómulo Betancourt in February 1959, faced a tremendous task of educational reconstruction and rehabilitation. The preceding discussion has indicated the state of neglect into which the schools had been driven, and the fantastic sums spent by the preceding administration for other government programs. Under Pérez Jiménez, education's share of the nation's budget even by the most generous basis of calculation, declined from 9 percent in 1946–47 to 7.25 percent in 1948, and to 6.42 percent in 1958; while, as noted above, the need for educational expansion had grown immensely. The need for improvement in this sphere of national endeavor is widely recognized by the new administration, and a greatly expanded educational program has been undertaken. The sections which follow will review the accomplishments of the 3 years prior to 1961, and will attempt to interpret trends in the areas of need.

PART II

EDUCATION TODAY

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CHAPTER IV

Administration

VENEZUELA is divided into 20 states, 2 territories, a federal district, and numerous dependencies, largely islands in the Caribbean. It extends over more than 350,000 square miles and has over 7,500,000 inhabitants. The country is sparsely populated, as the figures above would indicate. Eighty per cent of the people are in the northwest quarter of the country. Half of her territory, that which lies south and east of the Orinoco, is virtually uninhabited and unexplored.

The nation has a highly centralized form of government. The President, the members of the Senate, and members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected for 5-year terms by direct vote of the people, and there is universal suffrage. The Governors of the several states are agents of the central government, appointed by the President. State legislatures are elected, as are the municipal councils for the various districts of each state and for the federal district and for each of the territories. The states and the municipalities—as well as the other political subdivisions—have only limited power and authority. They receive much of their revenue directly from the national government and are highly dependent on it for guidance and authority. The justices for the Supreme Court are elected by the Congress, and other judges are appointed by the Executive. The right of women to vote, and the popular election of the President are innovations instituted since 1940. The President was elected by the members of the Congress earlier in the 20th century.

The President and his Ministers, his Cabinet, constitute the Council of Ministers. The Ministry of Public Instruction, created in 1881, has also been called the Ministry of National Education, and, as at present, the Ministry of Education. The powers of this Ministry over education in the nation have varied through the years. The principle of freedom of instruction, in the sense of freedom to teach, had been officially recognized as early as 1864, and the effect of its application was that anyone who was so inclined was permitted to open a school. For a time, there was a division of authority over education—primary education being regarded as the province of the states and municipalities, secondary and higher education falling within the jurisdiction of central government.

Prior to 1914, the principle of freedom of instruction was circumscribed by various regulations that kept its practice somewhat in check. In that year, however, the Gómez regime, probably to relieve the government as much as possible of the responsibility and of the financial burden involved in the support of public schools, proclaimed the principle of complete and unrestricted freedom of instruction. In a country woefully lacking in schools, where those existing were pathetically deficient, where the literate and semiliterate among the poor were desperate for any opportunity to improve themselves financially, this opened wide the doors to serious abuses of the teaching function. In 1924, in spite of the reluctance of Gómez to invest any money in the improvement of education, the government had to respond to the demands of a changing world and an impatient populace by giving the Ministry of Education complete control over all education. With minor modifications through later years, the 1924 reforms still constitute the policy for educational administration in Venezuela: concentration of administrative power in the office of the President, a power that he wields in the field of education through a Minister of Education whom he appoints to serve at his pleasure.

The Ministry of Education [1]

As already noted, education in Venezuela is highly centralized. Not only are all public schools—whether national, state or municipal—subject to the technical administration and supervision of the Ministry of Education, but private schools that want their programs recognized must register with the Ministry and follow the national curricula. Private schools must meet the same standards as those required in the public schools, and are subject to inspection by the Ministry of Education. In such a highly centralized plan of education, the quality and the efficacy of the national program depend to an extraordinary degree on the level of competence of the Minister of Education and of his staff. Since even the smallest details of school operation in the interior must have the approval of the central authority in Caracas, and important appointments and program changes require the approval of the office of the President, the selection of staff for the Ministry becomes of crucial significance.

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[1] *Memoria*, 1959–60.

In a country such as Venezuela that has been extremely deficient in the development of an educational profession, or even of a large group of self-taught, highly competent educators; and where advancement of those engaged in teaching has traditionally rested upon political recommendation and favoritism, it was rare in the past that men and women of true professional competence have reached positions of authority in directing educational affairs from within the Ministry and its dependent institutions. This has been especially true during the periods of the last two dictatorships, when public education was given little attention by the government, and the prestige and financial rewards allotted to the professional educator were meager indeed. It is against this background of neglect that the government following the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez in 1958 has worked to build as rapidly as possible a Ministry of Education that can respond effectively to the pressing educational needs of the nation.

As currently organized, the Venezuelan Ministry of Education is composed of seven major administrative offices or departments (*direcciónes*): (1) Office of the Minister, (2) Department of Elementary and Normal Education, (3) Department of Secondary and Higher Education, (4) Department of Vocational Education, (5) Department of Culture and Fine Arts, (6) Technical Department, and (7) Department of Administration. There is, also, an office of legal counsel, an adjunct of the Office of the Minister, which is responsible for the preparation and interpretation of the legal documents incident to the operation of the Ministry. In addition, the Ministry has an important role in several councils and institutes which are intimately related to the national program of education.

Office of the Minister.—The operation of the central office of the Ministry of Education has been, in the recent past, divided into several departments; coordinated by the Minister himself. In December of 1960, all of these departments (Administration, Secretariat, Archives, Public Relations, and Educational Planning) were placed under the administration of a Director General of the Ministry (*Dirección General del Ministerio*), who is charged also with the coordination of the various offices and dependencies of the Ministry. The Director General is, in effect, the Minister's first assistant, acting for the Minister in the latter's absence.

The three men who have held the office of Minister of Education since 1958 have concerned themselves with the study of Venezuela's educational situation and with planning of needed reforms. The fact that the current Minister was Director General of the Ministry under his predecessor has made possible the continuity of policy and action in the last few years in spite of personnel changes at the highest levels.

A project of primary interest during the past 2 years is the establishment of the *Oficina de Planeamiento Integral de la Educación*, an Office of Educational Planning, that seeks to attack the problem of education in Venezuela by a simultaneous comprehensive analysis of all phases of education.[2] This office was created in August 1959 with guidance from an expert provided by UNESCO. Its principal task from the outset has been to present an authentic picture of the educational situation, to purge the available statistics of error, and to give the Ministry dependable data upon which to base its programs.

The need for this kind of professional research and consulting service as well as planning on a wide front was recognized long ago in the old *Sala Tecnica*, created by Dr. Alberto Smith in 1936 and expanded by Dr. Rafaél López in 1937 and 1938.

It is encouraging that the new government of Venezuela is placing reliance for its contribution to education on continuous and systematic research and planning by expert educators. The current Minister of Education is a professional educator, well trained and widely experienced. The same can be said of his Director General of the Ministry, an educator with deep understanding of Venezuela's educational problems, and of educational thought and practice abroad. There are other notable educators in the Ministry, a promising development. It has been noted, however, by some observers of the Venezuela educational scene that the country might benefit by obtaining technically expert personnel from abroad to assist in the tremendous task of "redemption through education."

Departments of the Ministry.—The Director General also plays an important part in coordinating the work in the six other subordinate departments of the Ministry which are organized around their overall function to be performed. The allocation of jurisdiction is sometimes puzzling to those who feel comfortable only when departmental responsibilities are separated by clear-cut, narrow, and fixed dividing lines—ages, levels of education, grade levels, etc.

In this report, the organization of the Ministry of Education as presented will serve as the basic outline for the discussion of the program of education. This plan, for the purpose of the report, not only has much inherent in its logic to commend it, but also a compelling argument in the fact that official data are grouped in terms of that plan.

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[2] Ministerio de Educacion, *Decreto por el cual se crea La Oficina de Planeamiento Integral de la Educacion* (Caracas, Imprenta del Ministerio, 1960). See also the *Memoria* for 1959, pp. 36–37.

Elementary and Normal School Education.—Elementary education in Venezuela encompasses the preschool years (ages 4–7) and those of the six grade primary school (ages 7–12). The secondary or middle school level is not more than 5 years in length; the higher, or university level, usually continues for 4 years or more, depending on the title or degree sought. The Ministry of Education, the schools operating at these levels are grouped for administrative purposes primarily in terms of ultimate function, rather than of chronological level. That is, elementary education and the preparation of teachers for that level, as well as non-vocational and elementary education for adults, are under the *Dirrección de Educación Primaria y Normal.* The normal schools are, currently, 4-year postprimary institutions, but experimentation is going on with a new type of normal school that has a 5-year curriculum. This department also carries on a large-scale program of inservice education for teachers. The major effort in adult education by the Ministry of Education is in the field of literacy. Similarly, the 5-year college-preparatory academic secondary school (liceos) and the institutions which prepare students to teach in them and in normal schools as well as other institutions of higher education, are within the province of the *Dirección de Educación Secundaria y Superior.*

For purposes of administration and supervision of elementary education, the nation is divided into several regions, each of which is the responsibility of a supervisor from the elementary and normal department. The regions, in turn, are divided into districts under the supervision of district supervisors, named by the department also.

It has been emphasized earlier that education at the elementary school level, and the preparation of teachers for that level of education, have been most sadly neglected in the past. In the 20th century, except for the few years between the end of the Gómez regime and the reinstatement of dictatorship in 1948, there has been no real concern for mass education. This lack of concern is reflected with particularly devastating effect in the programs and institutions responsible for the training of teaching personnel for the elementary schools. Unfortunately, it is not always recognized (1) that deficiencies at this level of educational endeavor are the roots of educational backwardness in Venezuela; and (2) that these long-standing deficiencies leave virtually a vacuum in professional leadership for the reform of primary education and for the preparation of teachers for that level of education. It is this writer's conviction that at the elementary level Venezuelan education is weakest; and that this level presents the greatest challenge to educational reform in Venezuela.

This is true, not only because elementary education is the weakest, but because mass illiteracy and incompetence constitute the principal drawbacks to the social and economic progress of the common man of Venezuela. These circumstances have thwarted the rise of a sufficient number of men and women capable of conducting the research and exerting the leadership which national reforms of major consequence demand. Thus, the *Dirección de Educación Primaria y Normal* is faced with a challenge of enormous proportions. Those engaged in educational planning should weigh this, determine if the nation has resources adequate to meet the challenge, and advise as to how those resources should be harnessed—and to what extent they need to be supplemented from abroad.

The last official reports still designate a *Dirección de Educación Secundaria, Superior y Especial.* This is a traditional designation which, in fact, does not represent the current situation. Since 1958, *educación especial* (vocational education), included in the designation, has been removed from this office and placed in the new *Dirección de Educación Artesanal, Industrial y Comercial.* This means that the older *Dirección* is now concerned only with the academic or college-preparatory middle schools and with the university-level institutions.

For the administration and supervision of secondary schools, the nation is divided into seven districts or supervisory zones. The *institutos pedagógicos*, or teachers colleges, which prepare teachers for the middle schools as well as educational specialists, are direct dependencies of this *Dirección*, as are newly formed universities pending the development of plans for their autonomy.

Vocational Education.—The *Dirección de Educación Artesanal, Industrial y Comercial* has functioned only since April 1958, when it was assigned jurisdiction over vocational education at the secondary school level. In the 3 years since its establishment, this new department of the Ministry has sought to give new orientation and new impetus to the growth of vocational education. The *escuelas artesanales* are prevocational schools which enroll youngsters who, frequently, have not completed the six grades of the primary school or who, having completed the primary school, have had no vocational orientation. The industrial schools are intended to be full-fledged technical secondary schools. The commercial schools are the third area of major responsibility for the new *Dirección.*

Culture and Fine Arts.—The *Dirección de Cultura y Bellas Artes* exercises a large variety of functions in the Ministry, which were reduced somewhat in 1960 with the transfer to the *Dirección Técnica* of the office of publications and of the center for audiovisual education. It still administers the National Library, the Musuem of Fine Arts, the Natural Sciences Museum, the Folklore Institute, the National Academy of History, and the National Academy of Medicine. The *Dirección* administers and supervises all schools that teach the dance, plastic and applied arts, music, and the like. It also is responsible for a variety of extension services designed to stimulate the development of culture and fine arts throughout the nation.

Technical Department.—The *Dirección Técnica* of the Ministry has had a long history with varying degrees of responsibility and authority through the years. It is the traditional research and information center for the Ministry; though, the old *Sala Técnica* and the new *Oficina de Planeamiento Integral de la Educación* (both in the Office of the Minister) have been assigned important functions in those areas. The *Dirección* is in charge of educational statistics and the preparation of the *Memoria* of the Ministry. It also is responsible for publications, the study of school architecture, audiovisual education, national examinations, fellowships, and the study of programs and courses of study. These various responsibilities, cutting across the operations of all other divisions of the Ministry call for close coordination of this *Dirección* with each of the other divisions. The *Consejo Técnico*, with representatives from the other parts of the Ministry, is the planning organization within the *Dirección.*

Administration.—The *Dirección de Administración* is the office controlling the financial operations of the Ministry—the investment of the educational budget in services and equipment needed in the national program of education. A later section of this chapter will present gross figures on the budgets of recent years.

Affiliated Activities.—The Ministry of Education plays an important official role in a number of councils and institutes which are not dependencies of the Ministry. It is represented, for example, in the *Instituto Nacional de Deportes*, a semi-autonomous governmental body that has as its responsibility the promotion and supervision of both amateur and professional sports throughout the nation. This institute was created in 1949, and has expanded a great deal and lends valuable cooperation to the Ministry in the area of physical education. The annual report of the *Instituto* is incorporated in the *Memoria* of the Ministry of Education. This is true also of the *Instituto de Previsión y Asistencia Social Para el Personal del Ministerio de Educación*,[3] established in 1949 to assist the personnel of the Ministry through medical services, financial loans, and similar welfare activities. The governing board is made up of representatives selected, respectively, by the Ministry, the national federation of teachers, the national college of professors, and the administrative employees of the Ministry.

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[3] Institute of Social Security and Welfare for Personnel of the Ministry of Education.

An institute of even more timely and vital significance is *Instituto Nacional de Cooperación Educativa*, INCE, created in the latter part of 1959.[4] This is a semi-autonomous official institution which has been assigned a broad scope of duties in the education of workers that ranges from literacy campaigns to apprenticeship training, and on to even more formal vocational education. It derives its funds from special levies on businesses (1 percent of their payrolls) and from a much smaller rate on workers, with the government contributing a minimum equivalent to 20 percent of the funds so derived. With an anticipated budget of some 100 million *bolívares* annually, INCE is indeed a large-scale undertaking. It is managed by a board composed of representatives of the ministries of education, labor, and development; of employers' and workers' organizations; and of the national federation of teachers.

In May 1959 there was established a *Consejo Nacional de Universidades* with the purpose of coordinating and orienting the activities of both private and public universities in keeping with the *Ley de Universidades* of 1958. This council will be discussed later, in the chapter on universities. It needs to be noted here that the Minister of Education presides over the council, which is composed of representatives of each of the several public and private universities.

Budget

Probably nowhere are the recent and current efforts to rehabilitate education in Venezuela so evident as in a comparison of the budgets for education for the years 1957–58 to the present. The contrasts are made more telling when one realizes that the 1957–58 budget includes additions made to that of the Pérez Jiménez administration by the succeeding government in 1958. The total budget for education in 1957–58 was Bs.178,340,836, or 7.25 percent of the total national budget. In 1959–60 the educational budget was raised to Bs. 461,091,765, 3.87 times that of 1957–58, and representing 9.13 percent of the entire national budget. The 1960–61 budget, without counting additions made in the last months of the fiscal year, was Bs. 541,050,802. This does not include the large amounts being spent for what is basic popular education by the *Instituto Nacional de Cooperación Educativa.* Because of the retrenchment in national spending caused by the current economic depression or recession, the proposed budget for the Ministry of Education for 1961–62 is smaller by almost Bs.100,000 than that of 1960–61.

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[4] See the *Memoria* of 1959 and that of 1960.

It must be kept in mind that the Ministry of Education is not the only Ministry that expends public funds for education in Venezuela. The construction of school buildings, for example, is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Works. That Ministry spent almost 68 million *bolívares* in the year 1959–60 for this purpose. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare spent more than 27 million *bolívares* in the year 1959–60 for school hygiene, schools of nursing, school lunchrooms, and similar activities. The *Consejo Nacional del Niño*, with revenues from several ministries and from local governments, spent 48 million *bolívares*, while the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Communications each spent over 6 million *bolívares* for schools in their respective areas. All told, outside of the Ministry of Education, the national government spent Bs.157,540,300 for educational purposes in 1959–60. The states contributed Bs.139,716,373 from their own budgets, and the municipalities assigned Bs.40,789,443 for education out of their local budgets.

The fact that education is receiving an increasing percentage of the national budget—a rise from around 7 percent to 9 percent in the last 3 years—speaks well of the program of reform, but not well enough. A comparison with Mexico—a country similarly situated as to illiteracy, as to the need for industrial development, and so on, but much less fortunate in financial resources—suggests an underlying cause of the inadequacy of Venezuelan education. Twenty percent of the national budget of Mexico is allotted to education in addition to substantial amounts budgeted by the several states. In Venezuela, the amounts expended by the states and municipalities are comparatively small; so that, in the overall comparison of educational effort as measured by financial support, Venezuela is putting forth less than half of the effort exerted in Mexico. Gross comparisons such as this, with all their shortcomings, suggest that Venezuela still does not assign to education the place in the future national progress that other nations do.

Review

The control of Venezuelan education—national, state, municipal, private—as has been shown, is almost completely in the hands of the Ministry of Education. There is virtually no delegation of authority. This centralization is complicated further by the fact that much of the educational policy and program is "spelled out" by law—a factor that is a serious handicap to enlightened attempts for the improvement of education.

In addition, the Minister of Education, personally and through his staff, must pass upon practically every action of every school in the nation. The previously cited *Labores y Proyectos* of Dr. Alberto Smith, the *Plan de Trabajo* of Dr. Rafaél Ernesto López, the *La Educación en Venezuela* of Dr. Rafael Pizani, and the still unpublished *Informe No. 1, Para el Plan Cuantitativo de Educación*, all reflect a much more comprehensive and global approach to Venezuelan education than do the strictly reportorial *Memorias*. Unfortunately, even these reports do not offer data attesting to the professional competence of the staff of the Ministry. And yet, the professional competence of the Ministry is the *sine qua non* of educational progress in Venezuela, considering the virtually absolute centralization in that office of authority for education.

CHAPTER V

Elementary and Normal School Education

As evidenced by the organization of the Ministry of Education, the elementary schools of the nation and the 4-year normal schools at secondary level, which prepare the teachers for these elementary schools, are treated in Venezuela as one unit of the educational operation, under the *Dirección de Educación Primaria y Normal* (Department of Primary and Normal Education). Almost one-half of the budget of the Ministry, more than half of the budgets of the municipalities, and about 40 percent of those of the states are allocated to these schools.[1]

Since all recognized schools of all levels fall within the purview of the Ministry of Education, such data as enrollment statistics are reported by the Ministry. In some cases, these data are broken down as to whether they pertain to national, state, municipal, or private endeavor. Unless otherwise specified, then, the statistics on education in Venezuela are for all of the schools, whether public or private. It is significant, however, that private endeavor in Venezuela is relatively great.

For example, in 1957–58 there were 6,002 elementary school teachers in private schools as against 14,912 in the public schools. While the relationship had changed by 1959–60 to almost 24,788 in public schools, with the number in private schools remaining fairly constant, 6,101, the ratio was still highly significant. The increase in teachers in public schools since 1957–58 testifies to the rapid growth of public education: 14,912 in 1947–58; 19,247 in 1958–59; 24,788 in 1959–60; and 28,997 in 1960–61.[2]

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[1] All public education in Venezuela is free (no tuition), from the elementary levels on through the universities.

[2] Ministerio de Educación de Venezuela. *Informe sobre el movimiento educativo en 1960–61, presentado a la XXIV Conferencia International de la Instrucción Pública* (Caracas, Imprenta del Ministerio de Educación, Julio, 1961).

It should be stated that most of the schools subsidized by the oil companies, as required by Venezuelan law, are not counted as private schools. These elementary schools enroll the children, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces of the oil company workers, and represent an important contribution to Venezuelan education. For example, the *escuelas nacionales* (national schools), financed by the Creole Petroleum Corporation in the 10 communities in which the corporation operates, enrolled 10,793 children. In addition, Creole maintains private schools, known as *escuelas staff*, or staff schools for the children of technical and administrative personnel. These schools in 1961 enrolled 843 children, approximately half of whom were the children of Venezuelans. These *escuelas staff*, until the 1957–58 school year, were intended to duplicate the programs of elementary schools in the United States, and accordingly, instruction was in English. Beginning with that school year, the curriculum was redesigned so that the standards of both United States and Venezuelan elementary schools would be attained, with instruction in English in some subjects and in Spanish for others. These schools require much more specialized personnel, call for smaller class size than the *escuelas nacionales* of the corporation, and are, therefore, more expensive to operate. The latter schools that were staffed by laymen cost Bs. 948.63 per pupil for the 1959 school year (schools in two communities were staffed by Catholic clergy). During the same year, the per-pupil cost in the *escuelas staff* was Bs. 4,191.00.[3] The *escuelas staff* are interesting demonstrations in bilingual education. The graduates of these schools will be able to pursue further schooling either in Venezuela or in the United States, without academic or linguistic impediments.

Elementary Education

A certain element of confusion is introduced by the fact that the terminology used to describe the early years of education differs from country to country. For example, in the United States, the lower division of the common school program is known as elementary education, and the first three grades of the elementary school as the "primary grades." In some countries, including Venezuela, the entire lower division is referred to as "primary education" and sometimes, the early grades of that level are known as "elementary" primary and the upper as "superior" primary. This confusion is compounded when it is appreciated that in Venezuela the primary school has six grades, and in the United States it has encompassed a varying period of years—7, 8, or 6, depending on factors that have varied a great deal from state to state, and from time to time. The succeeding, or middle, school, which is of 5 years' duration in Venezuela, then contrasts with the so-called 4-year high school in the United States (grades 9–12). In this report, all work in schools in Venezuela below the level of the *liceo*, that is, below the level of secondary or "middle-school" education, will be referred to as "elementary education," whatever may be the age of the students. This level of education comprises several kinds of programs: preschool, elementary, and others concerned with the basic education of illiterate adults and youths.

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[3] Unpublished data made available by the Creole Foundation.

Preschool Education.—In Venezuela, preschool education is that instruction or supervision given in public and private centers to children between the ages of 3 and 7. Some of these centers are true kindergartens; others are nursery school type operations, largely under the *Consejo del Niño* (Children's Council), a dependency of the Ministry of Public Health and Welfare. The *Consejo* also operates some kindergartens.

It might be considered as self-evident, that with the pressing needs of Venezuela at the level of the elementary school and at the higher levels, the effort at the preschool level would be minimal. On the contrary, given the social and economic situation of the mass of the people, the preschool level of education assumes a significance of much greater import than is the case, for instance, in the United States. Venezuela is in the process of a spectacular transition—economic, cultural, political, social—wherein the farther down the age scale education is extended, the more effectively can education at the higher levels meet the needs for competent workers and enlightened citizens. And, given the disadvantaged state of the home of the common man, the sooner professional hands take part in child development, the sooner will the home be rehabilitated to carry on its responsibilities, and the quicker will the child overcome the handicaps that his home environment imposes.

It is with these thoughts in mind that serious students of education in Venezuela, among them members of the staffs of the Ministry of Education and of the Ministry of Public Health and Welfare, assign particular importance to preschool education. This concern, however, has not been reflected in any large-scale effort in the education of children between the ages of 3 and 7, or in the preparation of personnel for that task. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1958–59 only 16,559 children were in kindergartens, though 371,146 were enrolled in the first grade of the primary school. In 1959–60 the preschool enrollment was 20,170, of whom more than 13,000 were in private schools. This would suggest that those most in need of this kind of extension of education downward are the least likely to have the opportunity to take advantage of it.

It is of interest that the enrollment in kindergartens in 1955 was 14,811, of which almost 9,000 were in private schools. The fact as shown, that this enrollment rose only to a little more than a total of 20,000 in 1959–60, with more than 13,000 in private schools, suggest that, as a public endeavor, there is only a token contribution at the level of preschool education.

The Elementary School.—As mentioned earlier in this report, the founders of the Venezuelan nation were emphatic in the conclusion that universal popular education at the fundamental level was the indispensable prerequisite to freedom and to the proper government of free peoples. This conviction led in the 19th century to the creation of national offices of education, the passage of legislation in 1870 making the education of children between the ages of 7 and 14 free and compulsory, and to the establishment of institutions to further these ends. The "modern" dictatorship of Guzmán Blanco, which recognized the wisdom of making a good appearance before the public, did much to encourage public education. The dictatorship of Cipríano Castro, and, worse still, that of Juan Vicente Gómez, were certainly not "modern" in that sense. Those administrations, from the last years of the 19th century to 1935, viewed popular education as a nuisance burden upon the public treasury—a treasury which they could put to much more satisfying personal use. In their view, education of the "unwashed masses" was a waste of public funds.

The reform administrations that followed the death of Gómez, and were in power until 1948, sought to compensate for the neglect of education under the preceding dictatorships. They attempted to capitalize upon the release from tyranny while it lasted, by creating new schools, by forming new policy, and investing increased public funds in education. The records will show the extent of these efforts. Then, there came the restoration of dictatorship, under Pérez Jiménez from 1948 to 1958. The effects of this reversion to dictatorship are clearly evidenced in educational statistics, which reveal that from the kindergarten to the university, education received a setback of devastating proportions. In elementary education, according to the national census of 1950, only 50 percent of the children (972,467) of school age were enrolled; nearly 50 percent of those 10 years of age or older were illiterate; some 166,000 children were not enrolled because schools were not available; while almost 103,000 lacked the means to be in school. It is not surprising, then, to find that, at the close of the Pérez Jiménez administration, there were 469,149 children of school age who were not enrolled in any school (40 percent of the total) and, out of an estimated population of 6.8 millions, more than 2 million adults were illiterate.

Mere enrollment of children in some kind of school is not an adequate remedy for Venezuela's ills. The schools must offer a curriculum that is geared to the nation's needs, the teachers must be competent, and the children must stay in school and progress through the successive grades. These problems that have to do with the quality of education, its true worth in terms of returns to the student and to the nation, are even more challenging than the quantitative disparities, such as that between the numbers of children of school age and the number enrolled. It is in curricular reforms for the elementary school, in the preparation of teachers for that school, and in seeing that all children benefit from these reforms that the major task lies in Venezuelan educational development.

The elementary school curriculum in Venezuela, which is still guided by the programs adopted in 1944, is in need of rethinking and reconstruction. The last reprints of those programs made in 1951,[4] are detailed outlines for every subject taught in each of the six grades of the primary school. Judged by standards of the curricula of modern elementary schools, these outlines are pathetically inadequate. Far too much attention is centered on academic information, without reference to meaning or use, and on methods for imparting that information. As a prominent Venezuelan educator said to this writer, speaking of both the elementary and secondary schools of his country, "Unfortunately our schools simply *inform* the pupils, they make no effort to *form* them." This excessive preoccupation with the acquisition of data, of facts, of information—by rote, usually—and the detailed stipulation of classroom procedure in the *programas* are a serious handicap to Venezuelan educational progress. The fact that these *programas* are national laws and can be modified only by action at the highest levels of government, is a further deterrent to improvement. Then, too, children's progress in school is determined by national examinations which are based on the *programas*.

Thus, the school becomes a center for training and drilling children in bookish information in anticipation of questions that will be asked them as they move up through the grades. The *programas* tie elementary education to an academic verbalism that contrasts sharply with Venezuela's need for the kind of broad and balanced humanism (one could call it a practical humanism) advocated by Andrés Bello and Simón Bolívar early in the 19th century.

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[4] Ministerio de Educacion Nacional, *Programas de Educación Primaria, aprobadas por resolución No. 42 del 7 de septiembre de 1944* (Caracas, Imprenta Nacional, 1951).

There is still another factor tending to lower the effectiveness of elementary education in Venezuela. While education is free—that is, no tuition or fees are charged—textbooks and other materials of instruction are not free. These must be provided by the pupil, who, in the public schools especially, often comes from a home that is seriously disadvantaged, socially and economically. Many of the children are not able to purchase the necessary books and materials, and must still depend for education, in the words of Dr. Rafaél Ernesto López, on "the rachitic diet of explanations by the teacher." While this condition is not as extreme as when Dr. López wrote in 1937, the improvements effected since then have been relatively minor. A program of free textbooks is still one of Venezuela's most pressing needs.

Recognizing the need for the dissemination of good instructional materials at the lowest possible cost, the Ministry for 12 years has been publishing a children's monthly magazine, *Tricolor*, which offers a wide variety of educational material of interest to children. Presented attractively in color, the magazine is well done, and its subscription rate is Bs. 5 per year. Another serious effort to make good instructional materials available at low cost is that of the Eugenio Mendoza Foundation, a philanthropic institution established by a distinguished and wealthy Venezuelan businessman and his wife in 1952.[5] Its principal concern is in three fields: (1) research and experimentation in agriculture and cattle raising; (2) child welfare; and (3) cultural activities, largely in the area of the education of children and youth. In the latter area, the foundation has subsidized the production and distribution of excellent textbooks, sold at cost.

Very commendable progress has been made in many aspects of Venezuelan education since January 1958, particularly in the quantitative growth of elementary education. In 1956–57 there were 694,193 children in elementary schools—561,367 in the public and 132,826 in private schools. In 1960–61, the total elementary enrollment had risen to 1,254,255, with the greatest growth in the public schools, which had enrolled 1,084,631 children. There was corresponding growth in the number of teachers and of schools. Much of this increase in enrollment came from the large number of overage youngsters who, heretofore, had no access to schools. Therefore, a little over 75 percent of the 1960–61 enrollment was to be found below the fourth grade. In this connection, one of the big efforts currently under way is that of keeping children in school—that is, of reducing pupil mortality. The sixth grade enrollment in 1958–59 was a little more than 23 percent of the 1953–54 first grade enrollment. The 1959–60 sixth grade enrollment was a little more than 27 percent of the 1954–55 first grade enrollment. However, as yet no great reliance can be placed on small percentage gains, for the data upon which they are based are not absolutely reliable.

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[5] Pedro Grases, *Gremio de Discretos* (Buenos Aires, Imprenta López, 1960), pp. 46–52.

It is difficult, however, to accept as fact the conclusion reached by some students of population growth in Venezuela that there are less than 150,000 children of elementary school age (7–14) who are not currently enrolled in school; or, if that is indeed a fact, that there should be any complacency in the satisfaction that it may give. That this is not the fact is shown by a comparison of census and enrollment data. Preliminary figures from the 1961 census show a schoolage population of 1,392,000 and an elementary school enrollment of 1,223,314, a difference of 168,686. However, it must be kept in mind that a substantial part of the elementary school enrollment is made up of children who are above the compulsory school age of 14 years. Also, that in the first and second grades many children are below the compulsory school age of 7 years. During 1958–59, for instance, there were 79,553 overage and 20,581 underage children in the elementary schools of Venezuela.[6]

Undoubtedly, figures for these same age groups are a good deal larger for 1960–61 because of the expansion of the educational effort and programs. The number of overage and underage children in school would have to be subtracted from the enrollment before it, in turn, is subtracted from the census of school-age children to determine the number of those of school age who are not in school. On this basis, a more realistic figure for the school-age children not in school would be in the neighborhood of 300,000, or more than 20 percent of the total number of children of school age.

The above illustrates again the need for extreme care in the use of population and enrollment statistics. The figures on nonenrollment represent a serious problem that assumes even larger proportions if the data on nonattendance are added. In planning for the future of education in Venezuela, planning that must see ahead 20 or 30 years, a wary eye must be kept on population growth.

This writer shares Arnoldo Gabaldón's *inquietud* in this respect. Tragic errors can be made if the number of schools needed is miscalculated, or the number of elementary school teachers. Overestimates can have just as serious consequences as underestimates.

One of the difficult problems in elementary education in Venezuela is the fact that, in 1958–59, out of a total enrollment of 648,192 in public primary schools, 285,249 children were in one-teacher schools. This suggests that many other children were in two- and three-teacher schools—that share in the weaknesses of the one-teacher schools, though in lesser degree. Almost 30 percent of the public school teaching force was in one-room schools, and almost 90 percent of all public schools were one-room institutions. This latter fact suggests that effort in elementary education has been concentrated in the development of large schools in urban centers, and that little has been done to consolidate small rural schools or to create new types of schools (boarding schools have been suggested) which would bring to rural areas the benefits of the large, graded elementary schools. Given the poor preparation of the teachers, and the exacting demands of the national system of examinations, that reach their climax at the end of the sixth grade, it becomes virtually self-evident that the teacher in the one-room school in Venezuela is under considerable pressure to devote attention primarily to the few children in the sixth grade and to neglect those in the lower grades. It is obvious that he cannot meet the requirements that the *programas* impose on him for each of the six grades, and particularly so in the light of the excessive number of children under each teacher.

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[6] Oficina de Planeamiento Integral de la Educación, "Informe No. 1. . ." (cited above).

Another problem is posed by the fact that school construction, an area of very serious deficiency to begin with, has not kept pace with the massive increases in enrollment during the past 3 years. It was estimated in 1960 that if every child of school age in Venezuela were to be housed in an adequate classroom, the nation would have to provide 15,443 additional classrooms. Vigorous efforts are being made in this direction, but, in the light of the existing deficiency in this aspect of education, and the unusually rapid rate of population growth, overcrowding in existing classrooms will persist for some time to come. For instance, using only gross statistics, one finds that the average number of children in the elementary school classroom is close to 40—and, frequently, is more than 50. This overcrowding is especially serious in the lower grades where the recent campaigns have placed many youngsters of all ages. In 1959–60, for example, there were 431,907 children in the first grade. Counting the ages of 7 and 8 as normal for that grade, there were 170,596 children in the first grade who were overage, almost 40 percent of the enrollment for that grade, with the overage children ranging upward through the age of 19. Almost 9,000 of these children were 14 or more years of age; above the compulsory school age. The percentage of the enrollment of overage children in each of the other grades ranges from 42.5 (in the sixth) to 45.9 (in the second), with 42.8 percent of the total enrollment in the primary school in the overage category.

While, as noted, the recent addition to school enrollments of overage children has caused overcrowding in the elementary school, the condition is complicated by those children who have to repeat one or more grades. Using the 1958–59 figures for total enrollments, an examination of the 1959–60 figures reveals that out of the total elementary school enrollment of 1,074,434 in 1958–59, 200,155 or 18.6 percent were in the same grade in 1959–60 that they had been in the year before. The percent of the previous year's enrollment repeating the first grade was 12.3; that in the third, 14.8; that in the fourth, 15.8; that in the fifth, 12.5, and that in the sixth was 5.9 percent.

All of the deleterious factors mentioned above contribute to the high dropout rate already noted. That rate is difficult to calculate because of the number of variables involved in the computation, and the data used are gross figures rather than names of children. But when the second grade enrollment of 1955–56 was only 53.6 percent of that in the first grade in 1954–55, and the sixth grade enrollment in 1959–60 was only 27.1 percent of the first grade enrollment in 1954–55, it is obvious that the dropout rate is very large. This means, also, that large numbers of children have been dropping out of school before they acquired more than rudimentary literacy, from which many will regress to total illiteracy because of lack of continuing study. To the extent that a large rate of dropouts in the early years of the elementary school persists, to that extent will persist the need for literacy programs for adults—even though the goal of enrolling every child of school age in the elementary school is attained. That is, literacy programs for adults who have not attended school may have to be extended also to those who have attended too short a time to maintain their literacy. The need for the continuation of literacy and other rudimentary education programs for adults depends in large measure on the holding power of the elementary school and its effectiveness in providing for all children an education beyond the fourth grade.

Literacy Programs.—It would seem that the education of virtually all Venezuelan children in the first grade who are 14 or more years of age should be thought of as a responsibility of the campaign to eradicate illiteracy, rather than of the regular elementary schools. As stated earlier, these pupils numbered almost 80,000 in 1958–59. To a lesser degree, but one of considerable significance, the same might be said of 12- and 13-year-olds in the first grade, and of children of comparative ages in the second, third, and fourth grades. There were approximately 9,000 children who were 14 or over in the first grade in 1959–60, 11,000 who were 13, and almost 19,000 who were 12 years old. Similarly, the second grade had more than 9,000 children who were above the compulsory attendance age, and the third grade had almost 12,000.

If, arbitrarily, one were to take the position that (granting a 2-year span for children regarded at-age for any given grade) those who are more than 3 years over age should be in special schools or in special programs in the regular schools—this kind of provision would have to be made (using the 1958–59 figures) for 31,399 children in the first grade, 6,160 in the fourth grade, and for 2,226 in the sixth, with corresponding numbers for the other grades, for a total of 66,821.

The implications of these figures are far-reaching, one of the most important of which is that, currently, the elementary school in Venezuela, overburdened as it is, is attempting to carry an additional burden for which it is not properly constituted. Even under the best of circumstances, this burden would be regarded as of formidable proportions. Certainly, then, steps should be taken to distinguish between the function of the regular elementary school and that of special programs designed primarily for the reduction of illiteracy among those beyond the normal age-range of the elementary grades.

In the estimation of this writer, future programs of special education at the elementary level in Venezuela must be pointed, not at the illiteracy of adults who, for diverse reasons, did not enroll in school, but at those children who have enrolled in the primary school and have become the casualties of this level of education. This would mean that such programs would call, first, for the elimination of the causes of such casualties, and, then, for rehabilitation, through programs of fundamental education, of those who have suffered from this unfortunate situation.

It was estimated in 1960 that there were 2,426,463 persons, 10 years of age and over, in Venezuela who were illiterate. This estimate was predicated on the basis of population figures of the 1950 census (the complete 1961 census data were not available at this writing). This is likely an underestimate due to the probable miscalculations involved in judging population growth. In any case, as among those included in the literate population are many with the very minimum literacy standards, it is doubtful that one can say with confidence that 50 percent of the nation's population have attained functional literacy. This point is underlined when one recognizes that probably there are still some 300,000 children of school age who are not in school.

As part of the program of adult education, the Ministry of Education, in 1958–59 operated 371 *Centros de Cultura Popular* (Centers of Popular Culture), as night schools in which out-of-school youths and adults may complete any or all of the six grades of the elementary school. These *Centros*, operating in the regular elementary schools and taught usually by their regular personnel, enrolled 64,412 students in courses of the regular elementary school and 25,588 in courses of a vocational nature. It was expected that, at the end of that school year, some 4,000 would complete the sixth grade. The 90,000 students enrolled in the *Centros* in 1958–59 represented a very substantial increase from the 39,309 enrolled in 1957–58. In 1961 there were 430 *Centros*—158 national, 207 state and municipal, and 65 private—which enrolled 79,579 students in the primary school courses and 12,214 in the vocational studies.

The literacy centers, concerned exclusively with the eradication of illiteracy and called *Centros Colectivos de Alfabetización*, were nonexistent prior to 1958. The campaign against illiteracy inaugurated by the governments which succeeded Pérez Jiménez continues on a large scale, involving efforts by public, semipublic, and private organizations. This campaign, sponsored, directed, and supervised by the Office on Adult Education (in the *Dirección de Educación de Primaria y Normal*) in the Ministry of Education has made very important progress against illiteracy. In the latter part of 1960, that office was concerned with an enrollment of 91,700 in state and national literacy centers. Over and above this number, there were 69,322 students in centers maintained through the efforts of the army, the national guard, factories, religious groups, unions, and the like. As sort of continuation schools for the graduates of the literacy centers, and as a phase of the *Centros de Cultura Popular*, there are 240 national and 69 state *Centros de Extensión Cultural* which offer to new literates, courses that will enable them to complete the second and third grades of the elementary school.

As a preliminary summary of the state of elementary education in Venezuela, still without a close look at the education of teachers for that level, it seems evident at this time, 1961, that highly commendable progress has been made in the last 3 years. Such progress applies to the numbers involved at that level of education and to recognition of the broad front along which the quantitative defects of elementary education must be attacked. It seems even more evident that the problem of major concern for many years to come is that of the nature and the quality of the education offered by the elementary school. It little benefits the graduate of the sixth grade if his school has made him proficient in passing examinations of the nationally instituted *programas*, but has done virtually nothing to capacitate him for living successfully and with satisfaction in the Venezuela of today and of tomorrow. If, moreover, one envisions that a substantial number of pupils will not complete the sixth grade, the outlook is dismal indeed. Inevitably, changes in philosophy of education, in curriculum, in organization, and in procedure will be indispensable if the Venezuelan elementary school is to live up to the challenges facing it. The burgeoning of all of these changes will have to be observed first, however, in the area of teacher education.

Normal School Education

It is reported that in 1958-59 there were a total of 24,855 teachers in all of the elementary schools of Venezuela. Of this number, only 11,349—45 percent—were graduates of the normal schools which prepare teachers for this level of education. Since graduation from a recognized normal school is the basis for the certification of teachers for the elementary school in Venezuela, it is evident that a majority of the teachers in elementary schools were without appropriate teaching certificates. Of the uncertificated teachers, 11,349 had only a sixth grade education, and 264 had less. In addition, 1,618 were graduates of *liceos* or similar institutions, none of which prepare students for teaching.

The *Memoria* of 1960 (1959–60 school year) reports that, out of a total of 30,889 elementary school teachers, 13,370 were *graduados*—graduates of the 4-year normal school program. It reports further that 17,312 teachers had various *títulos*, or titles, all presumably at the level of completion of the *liceo* program; and that only 207 teachers had neither a *título* nor a normal school certificate.

When compared with the data for 1958-59, this represents phenomenal progress, and would suggest that the 11,613 teachers, who in 1958-59 had a sixth grade education or less, have been almost completely replaced with graduates of *liceos* and similar institutions; or that most of them have been awarded some sort of *título* on the basis of attendance at short-term, extension, correspondence, or vacation courses. In any case, the figures for 1959-60 still reveal that less than 45 percent of the elementary school teachers had completed the regular normal school program. This problem, coupled with the mounting need for additional teachers, makes education at this level one of crucial significance in Venezuela.

Normal Schools.—The plight of teacher education in relation to the staffing of elementary schools in Venezuela is graphically illustrated by the crude figures on the number of schools and of students through the period 1935-60. As related earlier, at the end of the Gómez dictatorship there were only two public normal schools in Venezuela, both in Caracas, which together enrolled only a few hundred students. Private normal schools added only a handful to a total enrollment that was strikingly in contrast with the need for more elementary schools and for trained teachers to staff them. The governments which succeeded that of Gómez managed, by 1946, to increase the number of public normal schools to 11, while the number of private normal schools had grown to 20. The comparatively higher rate of growth of the private schools is attributable, largely, to the fact that they provided living quarters for students, while the major public normal schools, those in Caracas, did not. These normal schools, public and private, enrolled 2,851 students in 1946. By 1953, the number of public normal schools had grown to 38, and enrollments in both types of normal schools were 2,597 and 1,448, respectively. More significant is the fact that by 1958 the number of public normal schools had been reduced to 10—though the private normal schools had grown to 68. The respective enrollments were 3,844 and 4,416.

This, again, is a reflection of the resistance of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship to the growth of education at public expense. The reversal of this policy is clearly evident in the figures for the period following the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez in January of 1958. By 1959, the number of public normal schools had been increased to 16, and their enrollment from the 3,844 of the preceding year to nearly double that figure, 7,690. These initial gains in public normal schools have persisted. By 1960 the number of public normal schools had increased to 31, and their enrollment to 15,719. By 1961, the enrollment in the same number of schools had grown to 17,767. This growth in the public normal schools, understandably, has been accompanied by a slowing down in the number of and enrollment in private normal schools; in 1961, there were 91—with an enrollment of 12,687.

It is not the function of this report to judge the soundness of the quantitative growth of the normal school program in Venezuela, nor to attempt to predict the enrollments and number of graduates which should be the future goals. The adequacy of this quantitative growth, certainly a matter of real concern in educational planning, must be judged not only in the light of population growth; in that of the numbers leaving teaching positions because of retirement, death, and transfer to other lines of endeavor.

It must be judged also in terms of the degree to which normal school graduates do, in truth, become elementary school teachers and remain in such positions, either as replacements for uncertified teachers or to meet the requirements of an increased population. These factors are, at the moment, imponderable ones, as data regarding them are few and highly inconclusive. It is common observation, however, that many students, even among that large percentage who are attending the normal schools with government assistance in meeting their living costs, do not go into elementary teaching. They use their normal school education simply as a stepping stone to other employment in business or to higher studies that will lead toward positions that pay better than teaching.

It is also common observation that the ultimate goal of a substantial percentage of the students in normal schools who do intend to go into teaching is not that of elementary school teaching—rather, it is said, many normal school students look to teaching in elementary schools simply as a means to pursue further studies leading into better paid and more prestigious occupations. Until all of these considerations are better understood, it is hazardous to take the anticipated number of normal school graduates and the yearly increase in the number of children entering school for the first time as the determining criteria for deciding the number of normal school graduates needed yearly—even though allowance is made for the reduction of class size in the elementary school, for retirement and the like.

It is generally recognized in Venezuela that the traditional normal school leaves much to be desired in the preparation of teachers for the elementary schools of the nation. Students who are at least 14 years of age and who have completed the sixth grade of an elementary school are eligible to enroll in the 4-year curriculum of the normal school. This curriculum is essentially that of an abbreviated academic middle school, with a few hours per week in education courses, including practice teaching during the last 2 years.[7] The close similarity of the first 2 years of the normal school curriculum to that of the first 2 years of the *liceos* permits the transfer of a substantial number of students from the latter institution to the former. A good many *liceo* students find that their financial resources will not allow them to pursue their plans for higher academic studies, or they may anticipate failure in the academically more rigorous program of the *liceo*.

In 1959–60 there were 1,618 professors in the normal schools of Venezuela—753 in the public and 865 in the private institutions. Of the total, only 179 were graduates of teacher-education institutions (pedagogical institutes) preparing candidates for that level of teaching: 121 were in public normal schools and 58 in the private ones. Only 325 of the total had university-level degrees. Of 838 who had only a secondary school education, 601 were in normal schools and 237 in *liceos*. These figures do not take into account the level of education of 347 normal school teachers who had their education in other countries, or of the 196 who are classified under "*otros títulos*." The small number of *profesores graduados* (179) indicates that the professionalization of the teaching personnel in the normal schools is a major problem. Another evidence is that, of the 31 public normal schools, 10 (with a total of 64 classrooms) were functioning in improvised quarters, usually former homes. Of the 84 private normal schools, 46 (with a total of 189 classrooms) were in such improvised quarters. These and other handicaps, some of which have been alluded to earlier, seriously impair the quality of teaching in the normal schools and ultimately at the elementary school level.

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[7] Ministerio de Educacion, *Programas de Educación Normal Urbana* (Caracas, Imprenta Nacional, 1952).

Remedial Measures.—Aside from steps to improve the material aspects of the preparation of teachers—adequate housing, better salaries, and the like—other measures are directly aimed at the improvement in quality of teachers in service and of prospective teachers. In the former area, various means have been explored since 1936 to improve the education of nongraduate teachers in service—through correspondence courses, vacation courses, and the like. In 1946, the correspondence course program in operation since 1939 was discontinued in favor of a plan whereby teachers, during the school year or vacations, would attend, or take examinations in extension courses which would qualify them for certification; or, if they were normal school graduates, for specialized assignments. At the beginning of 1958 there were only 2,100 teachers enrolled in this inservice program of teacher education. That number was more than doubled by 1959, when 4,450 were enrolled; and by 1960, the enrollment had reached 6,700. At the close of 1959, courses through correspondence were reinstated. In 1960 there were 6,000 students who were taking these courses, and some 5,000 of them continued by taking the 2-month (July 15–September 14) vacation courses.

In recognition of the efforts of teachers in service to attain full certification, those who had completed the first year of the normal school program were given a 50 *bolívar* monthly increase in salary, beginning with the school year in October 1960. These 50 *bolívar* monthly increments for each year of the normal school program completed would, with the completion of the fourth year, give the teacher the same salary received by teachers who have graduated from a normal school.

The above activities, carried on by the *Instituto de Mejoramiento Professional del Magisterio* (Institute for Professional Improvement of Teaching) have a compelling urgency for the under-qualified teachers, an urgency other than that represented in the 50 *bolívar* increments. A recent law stipulates that, by 1965, all teachers must have full certification. This means that the last year for initial enrollment in the institute is 1961; and, presumably, as the 1960 *Memoria* optimistically states, there will be no further need for the institute after 1966. Again, doubtful that all of the pertinent factors have been taken into account, this writer questions that this hope is a realistic one. In any case, the upgrading of teachers in service, whatever may be their state of academic attainment in the middle schools of Venezuela, is not a task that will end in the foreseeable future—or, possibly, ever. It seems probable that Venezuelan authorities have similar reservations, regardless of their predictions as to the future need of the *Instituto de Mejoramiento del Magisterio*, for they are seriously, and it seems successfully, exploring the establishment of a 5-year normal school. Even in the initial stages, this new type school seems to reflect approaches to teacher-education for the elementary level that constitute important departures from the traditional order of programs in normal schools.

The *Instituto Experimental de Formación Docente* was created in September 1959 for the purpose of training administrative and supervisory personnel in elementary and normal school education, for preparing teachers in the areas of arts and crafts and physical education, and for the purpose of evaluating and experimenting with procedures directed at the overall improvement of elementary education.[8] The school, located in a suburb of Caracas, has a 5-year curriculum in teacher education, a program that is intimately related to the kindergarten and elementary school which form integral parts of the institution. The curriculum is a forward-looking attempt at relating teacher education to the social context of elementary education. It departs from the program of both the *liceo* and of the regular normal school in being less prescriptive, less academic, and much more concerned with the kind of information and experiences which are thought of as conducive to the improvement of elementary education. Moreover, the spirit of professional dedication is evidenced in the unusually fine relationships among students and professors, as well as with the children in the elementary grades. This spirit is clearly reflected in the fact that the students of the *Instituto* have never been involved in the strikes, manifestations, and other disturbances that are common occurrences in other public middle and higher schools in Venezuela. In the opinion of this writer, the *Instituto Experimental de Formación Docente* is an important step in the right direction in the reform of teacher education in Venezuela.

The *Dirección de Educación Primaria y Normal* of the Ministry of Education is responsible for all of the activities reported on in this section. It engages in many other activities which are phases of elementary education, and of the preparation of personnel for that level of education. It organizes special courses, such as physical education and music education; prepares and distributes information in these and other fields; and sends out special supervisors or teams to stimulate improvement in the elementary and normal schools of the nation. Since 1958 this *Dirección* has made highly commendable progress in its attempts to overcome the state of neglect in which it found the schools at the end of the last dictatorship. In quantitative terms, the progress has been spectacular—as attested by figures on enrollments, number of schools, number of teachers, *bolívares* spent, and on similar aspects of educational endeavor. There is much room for further expansion in areas such as these, and undoubtedly the need for this expansion will persist for many years to come.

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[8] See the 1960 *Memoria* and *Esto es el Instituto Experimental de Formación Docente* published by the *Instituto* in 1961.

The fundamental problem is, in the last analysis, the nature and the quality of the education that is offered in the elementary school. So far, little progress can be observed here—the most notable effort being that in the *Instituto Experimental de Formación Docente*. The majority of the teachers in elementary schools are not normal school graduates, and those who are graduates were trained, in the main, in normal schools whose programs are far from adequate—programs, futhermore, that are designed to prepare personnel to teach a wholly unrealistic elementary school curriculum. The task ahead, then—the task of redesigning the nature of elementary education, of improving its quality, and of preparing a teaching profession to do that job—is a formidable one. Indeed, one wonders, given the urgency of the situation, whether the task may be beyond the current professional resources of the nation.

CHAPTER VI

Secondary and Higher Education

There are several kinds of post-elementary school education in Venezuela that, properly, can be thought of as secondary education. We have seen that normal schools, offering 4 years of education beyond the elementary school, are secondary schools. In the next chapter we will deal with some technical, or vocational, schools that are also of the secondary school level. In the present chapter, the concern is with those 5-year post-primary level schools which, when public, are known as *liceos* and, when private, as *colegios*. These schools, strictly academic and college-preparatory, predominate in the nation. The higher levels of education, toward which this kind of secondary education is pointed, are of several kinds and are variously administered. Some of these institutions of higher learning, like all of the *liceos* and *colegios*, are under the direct purview of the Ministry of Education, but a few, and the principal public universities, are autonomous. However, the Ministry of Education is very intimately tied in with all of higher education through the leading role that it plays in the national *Consejo Universitario* (University Council). The Ministry's action in these secondary and higher education areas is effected through its *Dirección de Educación Secundaria, Superior y Especial.*

Liceos and Colegios

The traditional secondary schools of Venezuela, the *liceos* and the *colegios*, are predominant at this level of education. It is this fact—that they are so overwhelmingly in the majority of all middle schools, almost to the exclusion of all other kinds of secondary schools, other than normal schools—that forms a major criticism directed against them. The persistent adherence to a purely academic curriculum, preparing for nothing other than the professional programs of the university, ill fits these schools to participate effectively in a social and economic situation that cries desperately for middle school graduates with specific competencies to perform efficiently the myriad jobs that the spectacular changes in Venezuela demand. The university can produce the generals and the colonels for this new circumstance; the elementary school can be terminal in the education of the soldiers and the corporals; but it is upon the secondary school that the responsibility falls for producing the large number of lieutenants, captains, and majors who are going to be the immediate directors of Venezuela's social and economic progress. This function, it is agreed by all competent native and foreign observers, the *liceo* and the *colegio* of Venezuela are not performing.

These schools, hereafter referred to as the *liceo*, have held tenaciously to an academic curriculum whose only purpose was "general culture" and preparation for college. This emphasis was even increased after 1950 when the college preparatory program was expanded by designing the last 2 years of the 5-year program of secondary education for this purpose instead of merely the final year. Today, the *primer ciclo*, the first cycle devoted to "general culture," covers the first 3 years of the *liceo*; the last 2 years are a *segundo ciclo*, or second cycle, which has two vertical curricula, one in humanities and one in sciences, which are prerequisite for admission to particular professional higher schools.

The *primer ciclo*, for each of the 3 years, is based on the study of Spanish and literature (4–5 hours weekly); mathematics (3–4 hours weekly); biological sciences (6 hours weekly); chemistry (7 hours weekly in the third year); English (3–4 hours weekly); physics (8 hours weekly in the third year); social, moral and civic studies (1–2 hours weekly in the first 2 years); physical education (1 hour weekly); and history and-or geography (4–6 hours weekly). In the second year of the 3-year *ciclo*, 2 hours weekly are devoted to arts and crafts for girls, and for boys. In the third, or last, year of the first *ciclo*, these 2 hours weekly are devoted to child culture. The last *ciclo*, 2 years of strictly college preparatory work, is divided into two parts: "humanities" and "sciences." That these labels are not strictly accurate is evidenced by the courses offered in each. In the "sciences" curriculum, the first year of the *ciclo* requires English, philosophy, French, Spanish and literature, design, and economic geography—in addition to physics, chemistry, biological sciences, and mathematics. In the second year, the "science" curriculum continues English, French, and Spanish and literature along with physics, chemistry, biological sciences, mathematics, and (an addition) mineralogy. The "humanities" program of these last 2 years of the *liceo* are based on Spanish and literature, Latin and Greek (roots), history, French, philosophy, and mathematics. Properly taught, the program of the *liceos* could constitute a liberal education for either a leisure-class elite or for a society whose prospects of entering and completing the programs of the professional schools at the university level were certain. Again, this *liceo* curriculum, commendable as it may be in theory, cannot, even under the best of circumstances, be adequate in the case of more than a very small percentage of the *liceo's* enrollees.

The *liceo*, just as all other levels of education, suffered during the dictatorships of 1908–35 and of 1948–58. When Gómez usurped power in 1908 there were only 297 students enrolled in secondary schools in the entire nation. In 1928 the number enrolled was 1,041. In 1935, when the population of school age (7–14) numbered almost 700,000 and, presumably, included about 400,000 of secondary school age, the enrollment in secondary schools (then 4-year institutions) was less than 3,000. The reforms instituted after the death of Gómez brought about rapid increases in the secondary school enrollment, which reached 22,299 in 1948. The Pérez Jiménez administration, consistent in its reluctance to underwrite the spread of education at any level, gave little encouragement to the development of secondary education. In spite of the nation's desperate need for educated youth, and in spite of the rapid rise in population, only 52,420 students were enrolled in the 1956–1957 school year. In fact, every year of the Pérez Jiménez administration saw a decline in the percentage of secondary public school pupils enrolled in public schools, dropping from 77 percent in 1948 to 54 percent in 1957. This indicates that the percentage enrolled in private secondary schools increased every year—as from 23 percent in 1948 to 46 percent in 1957. A marked reversal of this trend appears with the return to constitutional government in 1958. The 1959–60 enrollment in public secondary schools was 63,005, 72 percent of the total enrollment, while the private schools enrolled 24,923, or 28 percent.

The increase in total enrollment—from 52,420 in 1956–57 to 102,955 in 1960–61—is not only indicative both of the prior neglect and of recent concern, but of the enormous task that faces Venezuela in this area. By way of example, while the number of teachers in the public secondary schools has more than doubled from 1,019 in 1957 to 3,284 in 1961, the private schools, with only 25 percent of the total secondary school enrollment, have 2,356 teachers. This is in spite of the fact that large increases have been made in the national budgets for secondary and higher education. For instance, in 1958–

59, the budget of the Ministry of Education assigned Bs. 40,722,413 to that department; in 1959–60 the amount was increased to Bs. 61,308,015; and in 1960–61 it rose to Bs. 79,477,556.

While the increased enrollment in the secondary schools is highly commendable, it remains, as ever-increasing numbers enter the *liceo*, that its inadequacy becomes increasingly evident. As the *Oficina de Planeamiento* said in an official report in August 1960:

> Our Secondary Education—does not prepare for life; it is not a goal, it is a means of access to higher levels. The student who seeks the *bachillerato* more than anyone else needs vocational orientation because, if he fails in his studies, he exposes himself to becoming a man without (adequate) perspective in life.

That a very large number of students fall into that category is shown by enrollment statistics. Of the 16,986 youths who enrolled in the first year of the *liceo* in 1954–55 only 4,531 reached the fifth year. That is 74 percent of the enrollment dropped out during the second, third, and fourth years of the program. While the holding power of the school is increasing, pupil mortality will continue to be very high as long as the only goals of secondary education are "general culture" and college entrance. Competent observers have recommended that it should be possible for students to transfer to vocational schools from the *liceo* and vice versa. With that flexibility, much could come from those students who now drop out of secondary education.

The growth of enrollment in night schools has been very large in the past few years. In 1954–55 there were only 1,637 night school students in the 10 private and 38 public secondary night schools of Venezuela. In 1959–60 this number had grown to 13,676. These schools enroll students between 18 and 25 years of age who aspire to college entrance.

The large increases in secondary school enrollments has put a severe strain on the supply of qualified teachers. In 1960, there were a total of 4,199 teachers employed in the public and private secondary schools. Of these, 3,297 had received their education in Venezuela, and 767 in other countries. Of the Venezuelan-trained personnel, only 1,480 had university-level degrees. There were 945 teachers who had only a *liceo* education, and 503 who were graduates of a normal school—both secondary level schools. Only 925 of the Venezuelan-trained teachers were graduates of a teachers college (*Profesores Graduados*). While it is hazardous to speculate as to the qualifications of the other secondary schoolteachers in Venezuela, these figures again suggest that much needs to be done in the area of teacher-education for the middle schools of Venezuela.

Higher Education

In view of the "vertical" college-preparatory nature of the Venezuelan *liceo*, it is well to look into the enrollment statistics for the last 2 years of the 5-year program. At the beginning of those 2 years the student must choose between the "sciences" curriculum and that of the "humanities." That is, he must decide which professional school he will enter in the university when he receives his *bachillerato*, the title conferred at the conclusion of the *liceo* studies. As we shall see, the university faculties, or colleges, require one or the other of these 2-year curricula as prerequisite to admission—"humanities" for Law, "sciences" for Medicine, and so on. Only in the faculties of Economics and of Humanities and Education can the student offer either of the two programs. So the enrollment figures in the fourth and fifth years of the *liceo* are highly indicative not only as to the numbers that the institutions of higher education can expect in their beginning classes from year to year, but as to the approximate numbers that can be anticipated in the scientific departments and in the nonscience areas. In 1959–60, for example, there were 5,755 youngsters enrolled in the humanities curriculum of the *liceos* and 12,450 in the sciences curriculum. It has been estimated that in 1963–64 the universities should expect enrollment of between 13,000 and 14,000 beginners.

Autonomy.—It is virtually impossible to understand higher education in Latin America without some comprehension of the *reforma universitaria* and *autononía universitaria* movement.[1] The university in the United States is *suis generis* and does not partake of many of the features which are of fundamental significance to universities in Latin America—and, so, it is difficult for the educator from this country to appreciate the problems which the different traditions pose for the Latin American university. In the United States, the English college, the German research and graduate programs have blended with a political concept of educational administration from France which makes the state university a direct agency of government. Latin American universities, the older ones at least, are direct descendants of the early medieval university which was, in the main, an autonomous joint corporation of students and faculty. While the medieval university in Spain depended more and more on royal and papal approval and support as time passed, it jealously held to management of its internal affairs. This tradition was frequently challenged as the Crown or the Vatican, or both, sought to control the operation of the university. In 1784, however, Charles III of Spain returned to the universities the right to elect their chief officer, the *Rector*. This principle was endorsed by Simón Bolívar; and, in 1827, the privileges of autonomy of the *Universidad Central* were approved.

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[1] See: Del Mazo, Gabriel, *Estudiantes y Gobierno Universitario* (Buenos Aires, Librería "El Ateneo" Editorial, 1956), *passim*.

Febres Cordero, Foción, *Autonomía universitaria* (Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1959), *passim*.

———, *Reforma universitaria* (Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1959), *passim*.

The principle of autonomy had its ups and downs in Venezuela during the 19th century until Guzmán Blanco abolished it completely in 1883. Thereafter, until 1940, the universities were administered through the Ministry of Education by appointees of the President. In 1940, the reform administration of López Contreras relinquished control to the extent of permitting the universities to nominate a panel from which the President would select the *rectores*. This step towards university autonomy was rescinded by his successor whose liberal views did not include the idea of a university, supported by the state, administering itself without governmental control. However, the liberalism of the Isaías Medina Angarita regime gave the universities great freedom of action. This freedom, in turn, was demonstrated in the expression of political views by students and faculty, in political manifestations, and in the infusion of some of the worst features of political democracy into university life. This perversion of the function of a university played perfectly into the hands of the Pérez Jiménez regime which, in 1950, cancelled even the token autonomy enjoyed by the *Universidad Central*, imposed stiff tuition rates (non-existent before) and, then, closed the institution for a year. Thereafter, the principle of autonomy became indistinguishable from political subversion and rebellion—an unfortunate turn which, intended to plague dictatorship, has survived to plague constitutional government and to lend itself to the machinations of political extremists.

The restoration of autonomy to the universities, and the elimination of tuition fees, was inevitable when constitutional government was restored, unfortunately. The adverb is used, not because this writer does not favor the principle of autonomy, but because university autonomy presupposes a climate of decorum, of maturity, of stability, and of internal controls which are as yet not characteristic of the Venezuelan university circumstance.

In any case, in Decree Number 458, of December 5, 1958, the Council of Ministers (the Presidential Cabinet) set forth a new *Ley de Universidades*.[2] This decree grants to the national universities complete autonomy which gives administrative control to faculty, students, and graduates. The highest authority is exercised by a University Council composed of the rector, the vice rector, the secretary, by the deans of the several faculties, a delegate of the Minister of Education, a delegate elected by ex-students, and three delegates elected by the student body. The highest administrative officers, who must meet certain qualifications, are elected by the votes of faculty, students, and ex-students in specified proportions. The same general procedure is set up for the management of the several colleges or institutes. To coordinate the work of the public and private universities in Venezuela, the decree establishes a National Council of Universities. This council, presided over by the Minister of Education, has representation from each university through their *rectores*, (rectors) one *decano* (dean) for each university, and one student from each university.

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[2] Universidad Central de Venezuela, *Ley de universidades* (Caracas, Imprenta Universitaria, 1959).

Further, the decree stipulates that not less than 1½ percent of the national budget shall be assigned for the support of the national universities, distributed in proportion to enrollment and need. Particlar note should be made of the fact that under the principle of autonomy, the university campus is off limits to all authority—police, military, and so on—other than that which the university council recognizes or invites. In Venezuela, this principle is not an academic question. Later in this report more specific mention will be made of events which illustrate the miscarriage of *autonomía universitaria* in Venezuela.

The Universities.—Venezuela has five national universities, two private universities, and two national teachers colleges of university level. Of the universities, two are of recent origin. The histories of the other three go back to the 18th and to the 19th centuries. The largest and most important of the universities is the *Universidad Central de Venezuela*, founded in 1725 in Caracas. The next oldest is the *Universidad de los Andes* in Mérida, founded as a Catholic college in 1790 and converted into a university in 1810. The third principal national university is the *Universidad del Zulia*, located in Maracaibo, in the State of Zulia. This school has had a turbulent history. It was founded in the late 19th century, but was closed soon afterwards. It was reopened by the López Contreras administration in 1936, then closed again, and reopened in 1947. The *Universidad de Carabobo* was established in Valencia in 1958. The *Universidad de Oriente*, made up of schools located in several parts of the eastern region of Venezuela, was established in 1959. The newer universities go through a period of organization during which they are dependencies of the Ministry of Education, before acquiring autonomy. These institutions, the Universities of Carabobo and Oriente, still do not figure importantly in the data on higher education in Venezuela.

In considerable part a product of the political involvement of the public central university during and after the Medina Angarita regime, two private universities were established in Caracas in 1953.[3] Although not strictly speaking a Jesuit institution, Andrés Bello Catholic University was under the leadership of the Jesuits. A non-church-connected university, Santa María, was founded the same year. These two private universities are of particular interest as they can serve as an example of autonomy that is not vitiated by political factionalism and that, given proper financial support, could demonstrate stability, and responsibility, and excellence in areas in which the public universities have been badly wanting in the past 15 years.

All universities in Venezuela come under the regulations of the *Ley de Universidades* adopted by the Council of Ministers on December 5, 1958. This decree sets forth the organization and administration of the national universities, and establishes the authority of the government to regulate the operation of private universities. As already noted, the new law stipulates that not less than 1½ percent of the national budget must be assigned to the national universities. The distribution of these funds among the several institutions is determined by the National Council of Universities. In 1959–60 the appropriation was Bs. 77,525,582. This was increased to Bs. 93,599,500 for the 1960–61 school year. It should be kept in mind, however, that it is common for the government to make additions to the budgets of the individual schools, and that each school has some income of its own (there are no initial tuition charges in the public universities but students repeating a course must pay a fee). These increases raised the total in 1960–61 to Bs. 116,753,092. The *Universidad Central* spent a little over 74 million of this total, that of *Los Andes* a little over 18 million, that of *Zulia* something under 16 million, and the *Universidad de Carabobo* spent 8½ million.

The growth of the universities has been very rapid since the fall of Pérez Jiménez. It should be noted, first, that in 1943–44 there were just 2,783 students enrolled in the three national universities. This number had grown to 5,117 in 1948–49, increasing slowly to 8,834 in 1956–57. In 1958–59 this total spurted to 16,126, and in 1959–60, the enrollment had grown to 21,292, distributed as follows: 13,483 at the *Universidad Central*, 2,287 in the *Universidad del Zulia*, 2,066 in the *Universidad de los Andes*, 822 in the *Universidad de Carabobo*, 1,569 in the *Universidad Católica Andrés Bello*, and 1,065 in the *Universi-*

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[3] The founding dates, as given by the Pan American Union (*Serie de Información, Boletín 1959, Num. 2*) do not jibe with the fact that the "Andrés Bello" institution really came into existence in November of 1951, though the government did not approve it until October 1953. In that year, instruction began officially with 60 students in engineering and 95 in law and 105 students enrolled in courses corresponding to the last 2 years of the *liceo*.

dad Santa María. The *Universidad de Oriente* is still primarily concerned with perfecting its inauguration through programs of the secondary school level which will serve both terminal purposes and the purpose of preparing students for university-level work in a variety of fields.

In 1959 the total number of degrees conferred by the national universities was 1,106, of which 283 were to women. The private universities conferred 148 degrees, of which 51 were to women. The *Universidad Central* granted 806 of the degrees as follows: agronomy 15, architecture 35, bioanalysis 34, sciences (biology, physics-mathematics, chemistry) 14, law 116, economics 132, pharmacy 42, humanities and education 75, engineering 121, medicine 161, veterinary medicine 7, and dentistry 54. The *Universidad de los Andes* conferred 221 degrees in the faculties of bioanalysis, law, pharmacy, humanities-education, civil engineering, forestry, medicine, and dentistry. The *Universidad del Zulia* granted 65 degrees—in law, civil engineering, petroleum engineering, medicine, and dentistry. The *Universidad de Carabobo* granted only 14 degrees, all in law. The Catholic University, *Andrés Bello*, granted 73 degrees—law, pharmacy, humanities, and civil engineering. The *Universidad Santa María* (private and nonchurch) conferred 75 degrees, 62 in law and 13 in pharmacy. These figures will give a good idea as to the relative emphasis among the several schools and among the various professions.[4]

Teacher Education.—The preparation of teachers for the secondary schools (*liceos*, *colegios*, normal schools, and the like) and for supervisory, research, and administrative positions for those institutions is, today, officially at least, a function of higher education—particularly of the pedagogical institutes, or teachers colleges. Traditionally, teachers for these schools are not professionally trained. That is, whatever may be their academic backgrounds in the subject which they teach, their professional preparation is either nonexistent or improvised.

In much, if not all, of Latin America, the establishment of governments that were independent from Spain also produced a separation of Church and State in varying degrees—accompanied always with the creation of public schools which, presumably, were to be free of domination by the Church. Whatever the merits of this philosophy, and they were many and compelling, the fact remains that the only teaching profession that existed at the time was represented in the teaching orders of the Catholic clergy—the Company of Jesus, the

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[4] A very good general description of organization and program is to be found in such local publications as: Universidad Central de Venezuela, *Guía de Estudios Universitarios, 1960–61* (Caracas, Dirección de Cultura, 1960).

Brothers of the Christian Schools, the teaching Sisters, and the like. The staffing of public schools became, then, the task of improvising teachers—from the rudimentary grades on up through the universities. That improvisation is still exemplified in Venezuela far beyond the time when it could be justified or excused. It has been recorded earlier that the professional preparation of elementary school teachers was sadly neglected until 1935, and that it fell into evil days after 1948—only to struggle for revival after 1958. Training of teachers for the middle schools was worse—nonexistent prior to 1936.

Before 1936, and to a predominant extent today, the teachers in the middle schools, and in the institutions of higher learning, were hired by the class period—that is by the hour, by piece work, by the *cátedra*, or by whatever designation assigned. That is, the teacher is paid on a per-class basis, and his contract is, in reality, a composite of subcontracts—and, often, his employment is based on several contracts. It should be emphasized here that this practice is not peculiar to Venezuela, but general over Latin America—with some countries having a larger percentage than others of truly full-time teachers. As has been mentioned earlier in this report, the "freedom to teach" has deep roots in Venezuelan history and, even after control over all education was centralized in the Ministry of Education in 1924, the right of anyone to teach in the secondary schools was conditioned only by whether or not he could get an appointment. In the public schools, though there were many well-trained and competent teachers, there were also large numbers whose qualifications were based primarily on proper political sponsorship.

It was in recognition of this highly disorganized state of teaching at the secondary school level that there was created in Caracas, in September 1936, the *Instituto Pedagógico Nacional* (National Pedagogic Institute).[5] This was first intended to be a post-secondary school institution with a 3-year course for the preparation of teachers for the *liceos* and the normal schools.

Housed for its first years in improvised quarters, the Institute has gone through many trials. Most of the Chilean mission, which inaugurated the courses of the school in 1936, left before the school year was over. There was a lack of continuity in the immediate administration of the institution, as well as in the Ministry of Education itself. For years it was uncertain what the exact role of the school should be, even if it was to operate as a university-level institution.

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[5] The *Instituto* was then, and it continues to be, a dependency of the Ministry of Education, under the administration of the *Dirección de Educación Secundaria y Superior*. The new *Instituto Pedagógico Experimental*, to be mentioned later, is a similar dependency. Teacher education in the autonomous universities is not directly dependent on the Ministry.

In spite of all of this, the institute survived, to become the principal force behind the reform of education in Venezuela.[6]

The pedagogic institute made considerable progress after 1940, when its functions were more clearly delineated. It had been transferred in 1938 from the improvised quarters near the center of the city to what was then a less congested and less commercial area in the area known as *El Paraíso.* The new buildings had been intended originally for a *liceo*, but were assigned to the *Instituto* in 1937, well before completion. A *liceo de aplicación*, that is, a campus secondary training school, was made a part of the institution. While there has been marked expansion of both phases of the operation in the last 3 years, there is still pressing need for more adequate quarters.

This recent expansion reflects, among other things, the hard struggle that the institute had to survive during the Pérez Jiménez period. In 1948 the enrollment of the school had reached 683 students, and the number of the faculty members 73. By 1951–52 the enrollment had dropped to 322, and it stayed close to that low figure until 1958–59, when it reached 856. In 1959–60 the enrollment was 1,436. The number of professors had risen from 66 in 1956–57 to 102 in 1958–59. Indicative of the importance given to the work of the pedagogic institute by the new administration is the fact that its 1958–59 budget of Bs. 2,024,774 was raised to Bs. 5,137,414 for 1959–60.

In 1959 there was created in Barquisimeto a second teachers college, the *Instituto Pedagógico Experimental* (Experimental Pedagogic Institute), with four departments: humanities, social sciences, experimental sciences, and pure and applied arts. Six of the 10 professors in the faculty were from Argentina and Peru, while the remaining 4 were graduates of the pedagogic institute in Caracas. During its first year of operation, the Barquisimeto school enrolled 388 students, largely middle-school teachers in service.

It is of interest to note that, of the 163 teachers in the pedagogical institute of Venezuela, 103 are graduates of the first *Pedagógico*, that 14 others have Venezuelan doctorates or licentiates (and one another *título*), and that 45 have degrees from institutions in other countries.

While two universities, *Central* in Caracas and *del Zulia* in Maracaibo, have made education a part of one of their colleges or faculties (*humanidades y educación*), these programs, 4 years in duration, do not as yet figure importantly in the preparation of qualified teachers for the middle schools. For example, only 12 degrees in education were conferred (all at the *Universidad Central*) in 1959. This does not obviate the fact that many other university graduates, with degrees in other areas, do teach in the middle schools. How many of these take professional courses in education is not reported, though the number is probably very small. It should be noted that the establishment of a program of professional education at the *Universidad Central* in 1953 was a move by the Pérez Jiménez government to transfer the functions of the *Instituto Pedagógico* to the university. This attempt was vigorously and successfully resisted by the *Colegio de Profesores*, mentioned below, and, though badly crippled by the repressive measures of the government, the *Instituto* survived. These events, however, established invidious comparisons between the graduates of the university and the institute which have not been overcome as yet. Though both programs now extend over 4 years and have essentially the same admission requirements and course of study, there is yet to develop the sort of mutuality that exists in the United States between graduates of state teachers colleges and those of schools or colleges of education in state universities. With Venezuela's great need for teacher education at this level, it is not superfluous or amiss to offer that kind of education in the universities as well as in the old pedagogic institute and in new ones. It is possible that joint membership of the graduates of both types of schools in the *Colegio de Profesores* will bring about a *rapprochement*—a healthy mutual respect and effective cooperation.

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[6] For a brief historical commentary, see: Humberto Parodi Alister, *El Instituto Pedagógico—Fundación y Trayectoria* (Caracas, Editorial "Simón Rodríguez," 1958).

The pedagogic institute in Caracas enrolls students in seven departments (the parenthetical figures are enrollments for 1959): biology and chemistry (320); Spanish, literature, and Latin (206); social sciences (267); mathematics and physics (160); English (153); philosophy and science of education (290); and physical education (40). The last department, physical education, is newly reactivated, having been badly neglected from its inception in 1937 and virtually nonexistent at various times. While the Ministry of Education, through its *Dirección de Educación Secundaria y Superior* (Department of Secondary and Higher Education), administers the pedagogical institutes, considerable responsibility is placed upon the faculty. At the *Instituto* in Caracas the students have a representative in the overall Academic Council and in each of the departmental councils.[7]

The inauguration of the National Pedagogic Institute in 1936 constituted the laying of the foundations of a teaching profession in Venezuela. Its first graduates, the class of 1943, organized on that date as the *Colegio de Profesores de Venezuela*.[8] This organization proposed to operate as a professional body concerned with the improvement of education in the nation, with the up-grading of the teaching profession, and with the encouragement and protection of teachers. The *Colegio* has persisted through the years and, today, is a powerful force in the promotion of better education. Through its program of research and publication it has made many contributions to Venezuelan education. During December 15–22, 1959, the *Colegio* held its first national convention.[9]

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[7] *Instituto Pedagógico, Manual del Alumno* (Caracas, Dirección de Cultura, Publicaciones y Relaciones Públicas, 1960).

[8] Colegio de Profesores de Venezuela, *Estatuto* (Caracas, Editoria Grafos, C. A. 1959).

In the early 1950's the Organization of American States (OAS), with the cooperation of UNESCO and the government of Venezuela, created the Inter-American Rural Normal School, now called the Inter-American Rural Education Center (*Centro Interamericano de Educación Rural*).[10] It was established at Rubio, in the state of Táchira, to offer a 2-year program at university level of courses in rural and related education. Students, under fellowships from their respective countries, are selected by the Pan American Union (in Washington, D.C.) from nominees of members of the OAS. In the first graduating class in 1955 there were 72 graduates, of whom 21 were Venezuelan. Since the school is not strictly a Venezuelan institution, it has not reflected the spectacular growth manifested in other phases of education in that country. However, in the light of the need—one could say the desperate need—of Venezuela for development in rural education, this institution could fill a vital gap in its educational program of the future.

Teacher education for the middle schools, and university education in all fields, needs to be greatly expanded in Venezuela. Noteworthy progress has been made in the last few years of constitutional government, but this should simply be a prelude to a much more vigorous growth and reform. Undoubtedly, the efficacy of additions and changes in the area of higher education in Venezuela will have to be based on the soundness, the efficacy, of the programs in the middle schools.

The Foundations.—No report on higher education in Venezuela would be complete without mention of the important contribution being made by Venezuelan philanthropic foundations, especially by those established by the petroleum corporations. Through scholarships, through research grants, through grants-in-aid, and through a wide variety of programs at all levels of education, but particularly at the university level, the foundations are giving Venezuelan education highly significant aid.

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[9] Colegio de Profesores de Venezuela, *Primera Convención Nacional* (Caracas, Editora Grafos, C. A., 1960).

[10] OEA, UNESCO, Gobierno de Venezuela. *Centro Interamericano de Educación Rural—Reglamento* (Mimeo., 1959).

The Creole Foundation, *La Fundación Creole*, was established in October of 1956 in Caracas by the Creole Petroleum Corporation for the purpose of aiding and developing, in a permanent and systematic manner, the educational, cultural, and scientific activities of the nation.[11] The following list of the grants that it made during the period between its founding date and December of 1959 will give an idea of the areas of its interest:

University education	Bs. 2, 143, 023
Preparation of teachers	587, 489
Vocational education	790, 688
Secondary education	3, 906
Primary education	560, 600
Fellowships	2, 049, 804
Scientific research	941, 078
Cultural programs	186, 037
Miscellaneous	44, 304
Total	Bs. 7, 306, 929

As indicated in the amount designated, great importance is placed on fellowships. Between September 1957 and July 1960, the Creole Foundation granted 292 fellowships for study in Venezuela and abroad. Of these fellowships, 147 were in engineering fields, and 145 in such fields as Science, Education, Business Administration, Sociology, Psychology, Medicine, Veterinary Science, and so on. It should be noted that fellowships for university study in Venezuela and abroad are given by several other foundations, by corporations, and by departments of government. The Creole Foundation made a study recently of the 1960–61 fellowship program of eight organizations. The list which follows is a summary of its findings, but it must be emphasized that it is not an exhaustive list, since many other fellowships are granted by both public and private institutions.

The Creole Foundation study showed that it had granted 125 fellowships (81 in Venezuela, 41 in the United States, and 3 in Europe), and the parent Creole Petroleum Corporation, 45; the Shell Foundation had 16, and its parent, Shell Petroleum, 125; the Iron and Steel Institute had 108, Mobil Oil 32, Mene Grande Oil, 19, and the Ministry of Mines and Hydrocarbons, 76. Of the 548 fellowships granted by these institutions, 414 were in engineering, understandably. The influence of these fellowship programs, and of those of other institutions, can hardly be overestimated. The contribution of the foundations is bound to have highly beneficial effects upon higher education in Venezuela, and upon the effect that higher education will have upon Venezuelan progress.

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[11] *Tres Años de la Fundación Creole*, a bulletin of the Foundation printed in 1960.

CHAPTER VII

Vocational Education and Education in the Fine Arts

TWO DEPARTMENTS of the Ministry of Education in Venezuela administer schools which cut across the levels of education represented in elementary and middle schools. These departments are: the *Dirección de Educación Artesanal, Industrial y Comercial* (Department of Technical, Industrial and Commercial Education) and the *Dirección de Cultura y Bellas Artes* (Department of Culture and Fine Arts). The former, as has been mentioned, was created in 1958 out of that section of the *Dirección de Educación Secundaria, Superior y Especial* (Department of Secondary, Higher and Special Education) which was concerned with vocational education at the upper primary school and at the secondary school levels. The latter is a long-standing department which, in addition to many responsibilities of extension work in the fine arts and other cultural fields, administers schools in its area of interest, that, like the vocational schools, cut across the educational levels of the elementary and the secondary schools. The function of the two types of schools administered by these two departments—one technical, the other artistic—is essentially the same: vocational, as contrasted with academic or professional purposes.

Technical Education

Normally, most vocational education is on-the-job training—apprenticeship—though technical courses in non-industry connected schools are an indispensable part of technical education.

The history of this phase of education in the United States illustrates aptly the dual responsibility of the school and industry in the development of skilled workers and technicians in ever-increasing numbers and at ever-increasing levels of competence. In the United States, fortunately, this joint approach to technological progress was inaugurated early in its history, at the beginning of its change from an essentially agricultural economy to a commercial-industrial one—and before the flight of population from the rural to the urban areas. So, in spite of the many weaknesses of our system and the numerous failures that can be attributed to it, there has been a reasonably orderly discharge of this mutual responsibility. By and large, business has provided adequate apprenticeship activities, schools have turned out large numbers of formally trained workers, and the two have joined in a large variety of programs for the education, both in service and on leave, of multitudes of employees at all levels of technological responsibility. In addition, private business invests millions of dollars directly in subsidizing research and technical education at both private and public institutions of higher learning.

Mention is made of this development in the United States solely to point up the problem faced by Venezuela as overnight she seeks to convert herself from an agricultural to a commercial-industrial country, her people from peasantry to skilled workers—craftsmen, farmers, technicians, and administrators and supervisors of the multiplicity of enterprises which have evolved from the oil and iron industries. These activities, however, are bound to have ramifications of competing significance in many other industries and, particularly, in the development of Venezuela's land and water resources. Catching up with her deficiency in skilled workers at the lower levels alone, a deficiency now very great (in spite of the fact that some of the slack has been taken up by the foreign-born) is a tremendous task. The creation of the *Instituto Nacional de Cooperación Educativa* (INCE), mentioned in an earlier chapter, is indicative of the importance that the present government of Venezuela assigns to this task.

Whether INCE is the proper approach to literacy and to apprenticeship training of workers in service is debatable. The survey team for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, invited by the Venezuelan government, is not at all sanguine about this approach.[1] Its report implies that the more than 100 million *bolívares* that INCE will have at its disposal annually might be put to better use by business concerns and by the regular programs of literacy and vocational education of the Ministry of Education. From this distance it would appear that INCE, instead of using its funds to create and operate its own fundamental and vocational education programs, would do well to assign its revenue judiciously to private business for its educational programs, and to the Ministry of Education for reassignment to public and private schools also engaged in those types of educational programs. As a semi-autonomous governmental foundation, with 100, 200, or more million *bolívares* at its disposal annually, INCE could be a tremendous power in converting the work force of Venezuela from its predominantly illiterate and unskilled state to one of high development and productivity commensurate with the demands of the country's social and economic situation, and to one that can face with confidence the opportunities that Venezuela's resources presage.

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[1] The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *The Economic Development of Venezuela.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961, pp. 236–237; 355–356.

It should not be assumed from the foregoing that apprenticeship education has been totally lacking in Venezuela. Historically, every technological undertaking, lacking a supply of ready-made personnel, has had to devise some means of apprenticeship. In some countries, this improvisation has been systematized and formalized in various kinds of guilds, unions, and other trade organizations, or in systems of indentureship or apprenticeship by employers. While none of these has operated on any large scale in Venezuela, and apprenticeship was almost totally informal and unorganized before 1920, the advent of the oil industry created demands and introduced new concepts in this area. Surveying, transporting, drilling, and the rest of the complex jobs involved in the production of petroleum meant that many Venezuelans, heretofore literally technological and linguistic illiterates, had to be converted through apprenticeship into skilled and responsible workers in an industry where even the lowliest must have particular competence.

Mention has been made earlier in this report of the work that is being done in elementary and higher education by oil companies. No more eloquent testimony as to the systematic and efficacious apprenticeship education of its workers is the fact that, in a Creole Petroleum Corporation elementary school near Maracaibo for the children of "staff" workers (the bilingual school mentioned earlier), the children were about evenly divided between Venezuelans and North Americans. Creole Petroleum illustrates a policy common to all of the foreign oil companies operating in Venezuela, that of bending every effort towards capacitating native workers to become skilled operators in the oil industry, and of doing everything possible to more than meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education that apply to the companies' public and private schools. It is noteworthy that, in the area of vocational education, the oil companies rely heavily on the work done in their elementary schools, whether for the children (or relatives) of ordinary workers, or for those of "staff" members. This kind of policy and program, extended to all other major businesses in Venezuela, coupled with the expansion of related efforts in public education, would rapidly resolve Venezuela's dilemma of an expanding industrialization and an inadequate supply of skilled personnel.

A great deal could be made of the fact that Venezuela's educational program, public and private, has fallen far short of providing trained personnel for the nation's economic needs. The lack of competent *criollo* personnel for jobs ranging from the menial to the highly technical is notorious. This is so to such an extent that even partisans of Venezuelan development raise the question as to the innate potential of the *criollo* to attain the competence required by the demands of the new life. This question is, of course, without foundation in genetic or cultural fact—but the currency of its assertion by persons whose concern is for the development of a new Venezuela, persons who can claim some degree of authoritativeness in the matter, does pose questions as to why this opinion should prevail. The idea, advanced surreptitiously by otherwise very compentent observers that, somehow, the climate has enervated the *criollo* of Venezuela to the point that he cannot be expected to measure up to the foreign-born is not a new one. Very early in the colonization of the New World the *peninsulares* (those Spaniards born on the Iberian Peninsula) began to raise questions as to the capacity and inherent quality of the *criollo* (the Spaniard born in the New World), and of the Indian and of whatever *mestizaje* existed. Thomas Gage made interesting observations about this in the early 17th century.[2]

It is obvious that conclusions as to the virtual inherent inferiority of the native-born—in intelligence, in trustworthiness, and the like—were, in the early colonial years, an internal "black legend" that affirmed both the sad neglect of the education of the native-born, and the self-seeking maneuverings of the vested interests of those from the mother country. It seems that essentially the same motivations are behind similar conclusions nowadays. It should be remembered that in Mexico the Indian's situation in this regard was so extreme that, shortly after the revolution of 1910–20, the Government felt obliged to establish *La Casa del Estudiante Indígena* in Mexico City, with one of its principal purposes that of convincing the public that the Indian could be educated![3]

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[2] J. Eric S. Thompson (Ed.), *Thomas Gage's Travel in the New World*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1958.

[3] George I. Sánchez, *Mexico—A Revolution by Education* (New York, The Viking Press, 1936), pp. 151–161.

While the situation in Venezuela with reference to the technical education of the *criollo* is not as extreme as it was in Mexico with reference to that of the *indio*, the fact remains that the nature of the challenges is essentially the same. Prior to 1936, vocational education was virtually non-existent in Venezuela. This meant that except for whatever apprenticeship training was offered the *criollo* by commerce and industry, he was totally unprepared to operate effectively in the numerous jobs that the economic progress of the nation was creating. This meant, too, that commerce and industry would have to rely, until local deficiencies in vocational education were remedied, upon workers trained abroad, upon untrained local workers, or upon a combination of the two. The success with which commerce and industry solved this manpower problem would determine the economic progress of the nation. It is self-evident that reliance upon the *criollo* to furnish all or a major portion of the skilled personnel that was needed would have to be postponed until the supply of trained workers produced by vocational schools and apprenticeship programs came close to equalling the demand. That this goal is still very far from attainment is attested to by the facts.

Craft Schools.—These schools, *escuelas artesanales*, until the present, have been basic elementary schools (grades 1–4, inclusive) which offer instruction in arts and crafts in the fourth year. This education is not terminal, merely preparatory for enrollment in the industrial schools or for continuation in the upper grades of the primary school. Proposals have been worked out whereby, in the future, *educación artesanal*, will encompass all of the work of the elementary school and add to it apprenticeship training in various vocational fields, divided into courses designed to develop technical knowledge and skill in activities dealing with wood, metals, electricity, and design.[6]

At the end of this special program, the student would be qualified to continue his studies in any of the several kinds of secondary schools (academic, normal, technical); to pursue a trade at a higher level of apprenticeship; or to do both by working during the day and attending a night school. Included in this level of vocational education are the *escuelas artesanales granja* rural prevocational schools which add to the elementary program training and particular skills in farming and cattle raising. Pilot projects in the two kinds of *escuelas artesanales* are already in operation, and extensive planning is under way as to courses of study, materials of instruction, and building design.

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[6] The Ministry of Education has published a series of special bulletins and manuals regarding this program under the general title of *Educación Artesanal*.

It is anticipated that this new program of prevocational education at the elementary school level will lead to converting all other vocational schools into schools of strictly secondary school level. In view of the need for technically trained workers, it would seem that a "crash" program in vocational education at both the primary and secondary school levels is amply justified. All rural primary schools should have the features of the *escuelas granjas*, and all urban schools would do well to make it possible for most of their students to follow the added courses in *educación artesanal*. A "crash" program is indicated at the elementary level by enrollment statistics that reveal how limited the program has been and how slowly it has grown. In 1948-49 there were 1,485 children in schools of this kind, all in public institutions. In 1960-61 the total enrollment was only 2,749, of which 180 were in private schools. There were only 22 public schools of this kind, and 9 private ones. If it can be justified that the Venezuelan elementary school should contribute in an important way to the economic needs of the nation by offering prevocational education as an integral part of its program, and there is little doubt of such justification, the figures above are eloquent testimony that only a bare beginning has been made.

Industrial Education.—A better commentary could hardly be found on the state of industrial education in Venezuela immediately after the death of Gómez than that included in the previously cited *Plan de Trabajo* of 1937 of the Ministry of Education.

Discussing the *Escuela Técnica Industrial* in Caracas, the only such institution of consequence in the nation, the Ministry states:

> Upon making an inventory of the machines to be found in this school, it was concluded that the only useable ones were two small lathes for mechanics, two drills, one milling machine without accessories, and a planer.
>
> It is understood that the Technical Industrial School, whose purpose is that of preparing specialized technicians in those occupations which are in greatest need of workers, needs complete and modern equipment. Furthermore, it must have a teaching personnel that is well prepared . . .
>
> Among the courses and shops that it is most important to improve is that of graphic arts, since it has been established that there are no competent workers in this field in the country. This has caused many private businesses to contract their workers in foreign parts, which means depriving the Venezuelan worker of one of the sources of most productive income, since this occupation is one of the best-paid ones. From another point of view, this shop could mean great savings to the National Treasury (since all public documents could be published there) . . .
>
> Another of the shops that should be completely equipped is that of auto mechanics, since Caracas, being one of the cities with most automobiles, does not have enough specialized mechanics to meet the demand. This shop, too, could prove economical to the Government (since governmental vehicles could be repaired and serviced there) . . .

Dr. Rafaél Ernesto López, as he pronounced the words above, proved himself not only a practical and realistic administrator, but a prophetic one as well. There comes to mind, for instance, a story that appeared in a Caracas daily, *El Nacional*, on April 28, 1961. The story pointed out that Venezuela has 20,000 more motor vehicles than Spain, Portugal, and Austria combined—countries whose total population is six times that of Venezuela. Comparisons are made to show that Colombia has 134 persons per vehicle, Mexico 71, Brazil 93, Argentina 48, Cuba 36, and Venezuela 18. In Europe, so the news story goes, the number of persons per vehicle is 160 in Spain, 74 in Portugal, 73 in Czechoslovakia, 59 in Italy, 55 in Austria, and 20 in Switzerland. Whatever the exactness of these comparisons, it is amply clear that Venezuela has more than "its share" of automobiles and, as a consequence, an exaggerated need for competent auto mechanics and service personnel. This is borne out by the estimate of the *Centro Simón Bolívar, C. A.*, in *Acción Sobre Caracas* which states that Caracas, with one-fifth of the population of New York City, has the same number of taxis (12,000). What can be said for auto mechanics can be said for plumbers, electricians, welders, carpenters, cabinet makers, and the myriad of other skilled craftsmen to whose preparation the middle schools of Venezuela should be contributing mightily.

The *Escuela Técnica Industrial* in Caracas was in a state of neglect in 1937, as the foregoing comments of the Ministry of Education indicate. At that time, a specialist from Puerto Rico was employed to direct the reorganization of the school. Its subsequent progress, and that of industrial education generally, can be attributed to that beginning. By 1948–49 350 students were enrolled in industrial schools, 160 of them in private schools. In the light of the spectacular economic changes that took place in Venezuela in the decade 1948–58, it is astonishing that industrial schools—still in the upper elementary and lower middle school range—were enrolling a total of only 3,270 in 1956–57, with only 223 in private schools. Again, the advent of constitutional government after 1958 gave impetus to this phase, as to all other phases, of education. In the school year 1959–60 the 1956–57 figure of 3,047 in public industrial schools had increased to 11,889—with 337 in private schools—for a total of 12,226 in contrast with a total of 3,270 during the last Pérez Jiménez year. Preliminary figures for 1960–61 show a total enrollment of 14,088. Another interesting comparison is to be observed in the number of industrial schools. In 1948, one public and two private institutions functioned. In 1956–57, there were 4 public and 1 private institutions; in 1960–61, 24 public and 5 private industrial schools—a commendable increase—but, again, still far short of the national need.[5]

Commercial Education.—Commercial schools have existed in Venezuela since 1912, but their development was so neglected that in 1936 they enrolled but a handful of students, mostly in night classes, in superficial training programs carried out in completely inadequate classrooms. This is evidenced in part by the 1938 enrollment figures of the *Escuela de Comercio y Lenguas Vivas* in Caracas, a school which represented the best of its kind in the country. After considerable reform and stimulation, the school enrolled in day classes 54 students in the first-year course, 17 in the second year, and 10 in the third year, the final course. In the night classes the school could take care of only 80 students, though it had 216 applicants. At that time, as at present, the courses ranged from those which normally belong to the last 2 years of the elementary school through the first 3 years of the middle school. There are terminal graduations at the end of the second and the third of the last 3 years.

The growth of this type of vocational education was slow but steady after 1938. By 1948 the enrollment in public schools had reached 1,484 and in private schools, 821. In 1956–57, there were 7,128 students enrolled in public and 493 in private commercial schools. It is of note to recognize, however, that 6,246 of the total were at the level of the last 2 years of the elementary school; 676 at the first-year level of the secondary school, and only 54 at its third-year level. This suggests that the level of proficiency attained in commercial knowledge and skills was still at a rudimentary level. The increased importance given by the government after 1957 to this kind of education is indicated in the fact that in 1959–60 the commercial schools enrolled 15,931 students, 14,448 of the total in public schools. Also, in that year, 245 students were enrolled in the final (fifth) year. Preliminary figures for 1960–61 indicate 19,345 students enrolled in public commercial schools and 1,435 in private schools. These numbers, however, are still inadequate as one realizes the great demand that the changing economic circumstance has generated for competent clerks, stenographers, secretaries, bookkeepers, and the like.

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[5] The Ministry of Education, through the *Dirección de Educación Artesanal, Industrial y Comercial*, has issued a variety of bulletins which set forth plans for the reorganization of industrial education. For example: *Educación Industrial—Prospecto*, 1959.

Social Service Training

This branch of education is under the administration of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Currently the national government maintains two schools of nursing and one school of social work in the Federal District, and one school of nursing in each of the states of Lara, Carabobo, Sucre, and Zulia. There is one private school of nursing and one private school of social work, both in Caracas. Training in social work covers a 4-year post-primary education; while the schools of nursing offer 3 years.

There has been a steady growth in enrollment in the schools of nursing. In 1948–49 the public schools of nursing had 290 students; the one private institution, 147. At the close of the Pérez Jiménez administration, the enrollment was 678 in the public institutions and 100 in the private one. The reform administration which followed has raised the enrollment in the public schools of nursing to 926 for the year 1960–61, the enrollment in the private school remaining fairly constant with 108 students.

The National School of Social Work, established in 1940, has shown a steady decline in enrollment. In 1948–49 it had 137 students, while 31 students were in the private school. In 1956–57 these figures were 124 and 82, respectively, and for 1960–61, 77 and 11.

Applied and Fine Arts

The Ministry of Education, through the *Dirección de Cultura y Bellas Artes* has overall supervision of five public schools of music and five in the area of the plastic and applied arts. The programs of these schools, of post-primary level, are designed for the training of practitioners of the various arts and of teachers of those arts. There are no private schools in these fields, though some features of the programs are represented in the regular work of private secondary schools.

There was a decline in the enrollments in the schools of music between 1948 and 1958. In 1948 the enrollment was 611 and in 1956–57 it was 596. However, the last few years have seen a sudden rise in enrollment, to 1,286 for 1960–61. The schools of plastic arts have shown slow, but steady growth since they were inaugurated in 1951–52, when they started with an enrollment of 524. In 1960–61 the enrollment had grown, by easy stages, to 1,394.

An interesting phenomenon in applied and fine arts in Venezuela is observed in the remarkable rate of pupil mortality—that is, of dropouts. In music education in 1959–60 the enrollment in the first-year courses was 982. This total dropped to 181 in the second year, to 69 in the third year, and continued rapidly downward almost to the vanishing point in the later years. In schools of applied and plastic arts the first-year enrollment was 1,073, dropping to 90 in the second year, and to 23 in the fourth, the final year. These declines are not to be explained on the grounds that sudden large increases have occurred in the first-year enrollments. The same pattern of dropouts is exhibited for all the prior years for which dependable data are available. It is obvious, therefore, that a very careful evaluation of this kind of education is in order. The data indicate that, in plastic and applied arts, only 5 percent of the beginning enrollment stays in school to receive instruction in the fourth year. For schools of music, the percentage is 13. Both figures indicate that something is wrong in these areas of education.

A Conclusion

A realistic appraisal of vocational education in Venezuela cannot but lead to the conclusion that this is a vital area, and one in which the Venezuelan system has achieved the least. Were this condition to persist much longer, only a dismal and distressing prospect is ahead—a prospect wherein either the economy breaks down for want of competent workers, or wherein it survives through the use of imported labor. In the latter case the *criollo* gravitates to second-class status and worse in his own land. In either case, the possible political consequences are frightening. Neither in elementary education nor in secondary education can Venezuela continue to ignore the imperative necessity of including in the education of all of the pupils those knowledges, experiences, and skills—those attitudes and appreciations—which will ready them to carry their weight in the technological and social growth of the nation, whether they are to participate as common laborers, as craftsmen, as technicians or at even higher levels of responsibility. The purposes of education as expressed by Sanz, by Rodríguez, by Bello, and by Bolívar a century and a half ago were to this same effect—and their ideas are of even greater pertinence today than then.

CHAPTER VIII

Some Problems, Observations, and Conclusions

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS attention has been called to numerous pressing problems which face the educator and government in Venezuela. In trying to make up for lost time, it seems impossible for the administrator to know which way to turn to confront those problems, where to assign priority, how to allocate effort so as to maintain balance as education is reformed. From those chapters it should be clear that along every rung of the educational ladder, from the preschool on up through the university, challenges arise in all directions—administrative, financial, curricular, philosophical, etc.—challenges which, somehow, must be met successfully if the Venezuelan is to be redeemed through education from the depths into which abandonment, mistreatment, and ignorance have pushed him.

In this final chapter, the writer will review impressions and conclusions that he deems of special significance as educational problems in Venezuela. The review is, essentially, a critique of some phases of Venezuela's educational policy, of her educational philosophy, or the lack of a carefully thought-out and balanced educational philosophy.

Education to Avoid Work

Venezuela's problem in forging ahead is an extremely difficult one to pin down. It is a problem in social psychology, and its manifestations are elusive when it comes to objective measurement or to reasonably tangible assessment. Even before independence from Spain was attained, however, careful students of the educational task facing Venezuela were expressing concern over the fact that education was divorced from the Venezuelan reality and from the idea that education should capacitate the student to control his environment, whatever else it should do. It was on these grounds that men like Sanz, Bolívar, and Bello urged the inclusion of agriculture and mechanical arts in the curriculum—from that of the lowest grades of the school to that of the highest. Education for a useful life in a democracy meant, to those men, education for work; and it meant that even the most highly educated should have an understanding of and an appreciation for the work done by the farmer, the mechanic, the fisherman, the craftsman. Somehow, this concern never was translated into programs of action in education; somehow it was never really "sold" to the masses, or to the teachers.

The answer to why these sound ideas have been ignored for so long may be found in the social structure of Venezuela, the social structure in colonial times and subsequently. It should be recalled that in colonial times there was a wide gulf between the upper, privileged classes and the masses. All power, all wealth, all right resided in the hands of a very small minority of the population—Spaniards from Spain and Venezuelan Spaniards. The masses had nothing, and there was no class in between them and the dominant minority. That dominant minority was educated for their own kind of life, one of ease and of "refinement." In actual fact, there was a very high correlation between wealth-power and impractical erudition. So it is not to wonder that the masses, as they aspired to wealth and power, should become convinced that the ultimate goal of education was a life of ease and "refinement" to be attained through education. That is, one goes to school not to learn how to work but to learn how to get out of working!

However well-suited the education of the upper class may have been for their status—or, to put it differently, though the faults of that education resulted in no apparent deleterious effect upon men of wealth and power—it had no relevance whatsoever to the situation facing the lower class. That education, therefore, lost what merit it might have had for the rich and degenerated to the shallowest kind of academic verbalism when offered to the public in general. This phenomenon is not one peculiar to Venezuela—it can be observed in the development of education elsewhere.

In Venezuela, the perverted sense of educational purpose which was inculcated by the circumstances of the colonial period and by the early decades of political independence had no opportunity to reform, once dictatorship was instituted. Though one may say a kind word here and there for Guzmán Blanco, when it comes to educational progress, not even such grudging approval can be accorded his successors, Cipriano Castro and Juan Vicente Gómez. These men, ignorant men arisen from the lower classes, carried with them to high places the peasant's conviction that education was the road to power and that, therefore, they should give it no encouragement lest it lead to their displacement. The interim between dictatorships, 1935–48, was much too brief to allow conscientious governments to put educational purpose, as understood by the masses and even by most teachers, on the right track. This writer recalls what a problem it was in 1937–38 to persuade university-level students to do manual work in science laboratories! How unseemly it was for a "well-bred" person to carry a package (a new shirt, tie, pair of socks) in his hand from the store to his automobile (which was parked two blocks away)! How much thought went into planning for cafeterias in institutions of higher learning—cafeterias where "well-bred" students would have to carry their own trays! Ten years is much too short a period to change such attitudes, given the lack of continuity in carrying the task forward and given, too, the difficulty of having the patient prescribe for his own illness.

The educational record of the 1948–58 governments has been amply documented in earlier chapters of this study. Nothing in that record would lead even the most generous observer to conclude that those governments saw in public education anything other than an unnecessary burden on the national treasury. More still, the Pérez Jiménez administration regarded the secondary school students, the students of the *Instituto Pedagógico*, and the students of the *Universidad Central* as enemies—and it did as much as it dared to throttle them and to reduce their number. So one would not be surprised that, in 1958, the new national as well as the states governments were still faced with the unrealistic popular conviction, that the way to get out of working is to acquire the trappings of erudition as cheaply and as quickly as possible. This conclusion, voiced to this writer by distinguished educators and by other Venezuelan intellectuals, is one of the most distressing of the special problems facing the nation.

Rural Education

Intimately related to the topic that has been rapidly sketched in the preceding section is that of rural education. Published and unpublished analyses by very competent investigators, foreign and Venezuelan, concur in the conclusion that rural education, as such, is virtually nonexistent in Venezuela. A very thoughtful, a very penetrating review and critique is offered by a widely experienced rural school teacher, Samuel Eduardo Quenza, in an article in the professional education journal published by the Ministry of Education.[1] His is a devastating condemnation of the neglect of this phase of Venezuelan education. He reviews the history of serious and promising beginnings made in 1937, when foundations were laid for rural normal schools, when the Rural Missions were established, and special effort was expended towards the establishment of true rural schools. Quenza underlines the fact that if statistics reveal large sectors of the Venezuelan population as illiterate and ignorant, and that they labor under superstitions, the status of the rural population is a great deal worse in the same sense than that of the urban population.

The governments that operated between the death of Gómez (in 1935) and the dictatorship that took over in 1948, as Quenza points out, tried to create a program of rural education, and important gains were achieved. The governments between 1948 and 1958 saw to it that those gains were obliterated. In 1955, by law, rural education was eliminated as a phase of the program of public education. The rural schools that existed, largely one-room and other small schools, were then expected to conform to the same curricula and standards as those for urban schools. The rural normal schools were closed and the Rural Missions discontinued.

The state of the rural schools is clearly described in an unpublished private document that was prepared by an authoritative, and responsible observer who said, in July 1956:

> I have visited many of the one-room rural schools. Many of them can be called schools only because they do occupy a building with some desks and a teacher of sorts. But there is nothing else in evidence that would indicate that it was a place of learning. Many of them even lack a single black board. Few have any other equipment than desks. The desks are only "adequate" because there is less than 40 percent registration in the community, and an absentee rate of about one third. There is no study material whatever. The teacher, who sometimes has four grades, studied herself in the school in which she is teaching.

There is little point in dwelling at length upon the miserable state of abandonment into which rural education had fallen by 1958. What has been stated or implied above will suggest the enormous task that faces the government in the task of building a program of rural education. Not only must it start "from scratch," but must combat the long-standing and deeply ingrained addiction to verbalistic education, must convince teachers and patrons that work is dignified, that one learns by doing; and that the "doing" in a rural society means the performance of intellectual and physical activities of significance to progressive rural life.

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[1] Samuel Eduardo Quenza, "Aportaciones de un maestro rural para el estudio del problema de la educación del campesino venezolano," *Educación*, Etapa III, No. 91, Noviembre 1960, pp. 41–67.

Mention has been made already of the vast and unexploited agricultural resources of the nation, of the population explosion, of the flight of population from the country to the city. Agrarian reforms that have been initiated since 1958 are seeking to stem this flow of population and to exploit Venezuela's land resources. In the last analysis, however, the success of agrarian reforms hinges on the capability of the farmer to adapt himself to rural life and operate efficiently in the tasks of that life. Herein lies the role of the rural school, a school whose curriculum and whose total process should capacitate the rural child to be a useful, patriotic, and intelligent citizen whose usefulness and patriotism is manifested in his effective participation and contentment in Venezuelan rural life. The thesis of the Pérez Jiménez administration that differentiating rural from urban education "would weaken the cultural unity of the people of the nation" is an absurdity, for no one ever proposed that the differentiation should be anything other than in the choice of the means by which the common ultimate ends were to be attained.

The government further argued that as both rural and urban children were to enter the same secondary school, there should be no differentiation between rural and urban elementary education. The government erred in the assumption that the academic achievement of rural children would be inferior to that of urban children simply because the former used rural-life activities in acquiring their basic education. This is another evidence of the basic fallacy that work, except possibly that in the top-level "white collar" and technical positions, is undignified.

National Examinations

There are so many variables in the problem posed by national examinations in Venezuela that it is difficult to assess the policy and the program. Yet this problem, without question, confronts the educational program of Venezuela with one of its most serious challenges. The controversies that have raged in Venezuela around this problem attest to its importance and to the elusiveness of satisfactory answers. Given adequately trained teachers, one could proceed to some decision as to whether outsiders should prepare and administer the final examinations of the pupils; and one could conclude as to the advisability of specifying in law when and how examinations should be given, and what they should cover.[2] Or, given a realistic curriculum and a professionally competent technical department in the Ministry of Education, unhampered by detailed specifications in law, examinations could be prepared in a central office and applied throughout the nation, under careful supervision. Conditions being what they are, there hardly seems to be a really good answer to what to do about assessing the progress of pupils in the primary and second schools of the nation.

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[2] The regulations governing examinations are reproduced in a section entitled "Consejo Técnico de Educación" in *Educación*, Etapa III, No. 90, June 1960, pp. 119–144.

The administration of end-of-the-year examinations by a jury or commission which is made up, at least in part, of examiners from outside the pupil's school seems at considerable variance with the progressive educator's concept of what is good in the education of children, especially of little children. But, in Venezuela, from the first grade on through the sixth, each pupil must face an examining jury (his classroom teacher is usually one of the three members) before he can be promoted from one grade to the next. Exception is made (not including graduation examinations in the sixth grade) of those pupils who have attained a mark of 19 or 20 (in a grading system of 1–20) in the examinations given them by their classroom teacher during the course of the year. Everyone completing the sixth grade and wishing to receive the Primary Education Certificate must take examinations under the supervision of a jury selected by the *Dirección Técnica's* representatives. At the secondary school level, examinations are given in much the same way, but with each examination restricted to a particular academic subject-matter area.

Various plans have been proposed for the reform of Venezuela's examinations program. The latest one, briefly referred to above, was adopted after the June 1958 reform of the basic law on education. As early as 1937, when the examinations program was extremely centralized in a semi-autonomous section of the Ministry and when the giving of examinations was highly rewarding financially to the examiners, drastic reforms were proposed: That juries examine only the pupils falling within the borderline category between the pupils failed by the teacher and those that she passes unconditionally, that the classroom teacher be a member of every examining jury (heretofore she had been excluded), and that examiners' fees be discontinued. These proposals were tried later in varying degrees and combinations, with almost disastrous results, caused not by the lack of merit of the proposals, but by the timing of their application, by the political overtones accompanying their application, because of the protests of vested interests, and because of administrative ineptness.

Given the unrealistic nature of the curricula for most children, and the inadequate preparation of the teaching personnel, the process of education in Venezuela will continue to be the accumulation of information for the passing of tests: The more hard-pressed the teacher, by the number of children and grades that are her responsibility and by her inadequate preparation, the more verbalistic will be the education that she imparts. So it becomes evident that the problem of examinations in Venezuela must be looked upon in the total context of education there. Education for what? A system of values in education, an educational philosophy, must be arrived at and put into practice before one can place the parts of an educational program in proper perspective. As yet, this does not seem to have been accomplished in Venezuela. The current administration gives every evidence of the exercise of good judgment in the reform of education, but that government has been in existence only 3 years—since 1958—and it will take many more years to arrive at a defensible and acceptable concept of national educational purpose.

Politics and Education

Reference has been made earlier in this study to the part played by university students in the protests against dictatorship, and of how the dictatorships of *Gómez* and of *Pérez Jiménez* took repressive measures against those students. Mention has been made, also, of the meaning of university autonomy, of how basic that idea is to higher education in Latin America. The consequences of the two ideas—of political action by students and of university autonomy—when so combined that it is difficult if not impossible to determine what is politics and what is university autonomy are devastating ones. While the confusion of political democracy and of university autonomy need not be bad if clear lines of demarcation are drawn in certain areas and for particular circumstances. Unless such lines are drawn and limitations and restrictions established, the very worthy ends for which each stands will not only be frustrated, but political democracy and university autonomy can be so perverted that the contrary to those ends is the consequence. Venezuela is currently in the throes of this confusion, and how the matter is resolved will be of utmost significance not only to the progress of education there but to the very course of the national destiny.

In assessing the operation of university autonomy it is important to take into account that in Venezuela around 75 percent of the university professors are employed part-time—many to teach only one course. A similar situation exists in the public secondary schools, the *liceos*. This means that only a small minority of the faculty is on campus for more than the given class period. There is also teacher absenteeism—a matter which reaches such proportions that regulations have been drawn to the effect that a professor who is absent for more than 25 percent of the time is subject to dismissal! Absenteeism greater than this is not unusual. Incidentally, in examinations at both the secondary and higher levels, students are held responsible only for "*la materia vista*,"—the work actually covered in classes. The subject matter missed because of teacher absence, student strikes, and the like, cannot be included in the tests. Of particular importance, moreover, is that in the absence of the faculty small organized student groups can be dominant in setting the tone of campus life. Or, to the same effect, faculty members who wish to direct the course of campus life and will devote time to that end can have inordinate influence. When it is recalled that the *Ley de Universidades* gives seats in the various governing councils of the university to representatives elected by alumni, by students, and by faculty, these circumstances assume more than ordinary importance.

The prestige of students, at both the secondary and university levels, in political matters was placed high by their determined and courageous resistance to Gómez and to Pérez Jiménez. Aided and abetted by some of their teachers, the students engaged in a variety of *manifestaciones* in behalf of democracy, of decency and justice. Many were jailed, many exiled, many killed. However fine their ideals, however great their contributions, and however laudable their tactics in attaining their ends, they did open the door to any and all kinds of political action—and what was fine, great, and laudable earlier has degenerated at times to manifestations of irresponsibility, to anarchy, and to the perversion of the goals of political democracy and those of university autonomy.

Reference to the daily newspapers of Caracas for any recent school year will convince any impartial observer that factional politics, often without convincing rhyme or reason, run rampant on university campuses and in the *liceos*. The political parties, the most active of which have been Communist or pro-Communist on campuses, vie for dominance in university elections and in the demonstrations of students. *Liceo* students are led into riots hither and yon; some are employed to manufacture Molotov cocktails, and to engage in terrorism and guerrilla activities. Strikes are called, marches are organized—these often being expressions of sympathy for the little understood issues being argued.

Irresponsible, and unbridled, the political action of some groups of students in Venezuela are making a mockery of university autonomy and educational discipline at both the secondary and university levels. The political power of the students has been allowed to get out of hand, the place of political democracy in educational institutions has been vitiated by political irresponsibility. These conclusions are of easy documentation, and as stated earlier, reference to the daily newspapers of Venezuela, would suffice.[3]

Along with the privileges of autonomy, the universities of Venezuela enjoy those of private entities and more: the campuses are outside of the jurisdiction of the police and of the military! Students, however unrepresentative they might be of student body sentiment, can act without fear of interference from the police or from the military. This aspect of university autonomy is jealously defended—and it has merit, in principle. However, also imbedded in the principle, but not in Venezuelan practice, is the concept that a university is for the pursuit of knowledge, for the search for truth—that it belongs to the world of scholarship; and that the social action of the university must conform to the norms of scholarship, to those of applied intelligence, and that in politics and elsewhere, the university is a responsible institution.

These observations suggest that Venezuela has a problem which involves limiting university autonomy without infringing upon legitimate university rights, but preventing the autonomy from being used for ends incompatible with the exalted idea basic to that autonomy: that the university belongs to the world of scholarship. This suggestion is not an academic one, nor one that has meaning only to those who are interested in the philosophy of education. Whether in Venezuela or in the United States, truth will be attained by the school only if that school can operate within a climate of freedom—and license, like the control by vested or biased interests, is not freedom. These observations suggest, also, that at the level of secondary education, the Ministry of Education has a problem in discipline. Undoubtedly, adolescents should be encouraged to be alive to the political issues of the times; but that aliveness should be kept under control so that proper educational purposes may be served. Further, there should be little place for extreme political factionalism, along the lines of the national political parties, in secondary education—and certainly, no place for the interference by political parties in the education, political or otherwise, of secondary school students.

Liceo students have participated in major demonstrations involving many unfounded issues. University students have been just as misguided, and have acted just as irresponsibly. This is not a categorical condemnation of students at either level—it is simply a realistic recognition that, as reported by the press, it would appear that the students do not make good sense in their political actions. It is recognized, further, that the students that give this impression are, in all probability, very much in the minority in the student body of the respective institutions.

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[3] See El Universal or La Esfera of Caracas, for instance, for the month of May [illegible].

The very fact that political action at both the secondary and higher levels of education, has been so unsavory, so ephemeral and so irresponsible in recent years—and so important and annoying to government—suggests that the political function of student bodies should be carefully reviewed. There is a saying in Spanish, which is sure to be found in other languages, that the one-eyed person is king among the totally blind. This saying has applicability as to the political acts of the students of secondary and higher schools in Venezuela—and careful recognition needs to be made of the limitations that seeing only with one eye imposes on social perspective.

The Plight of the Criollo

One of Rómulo Gallegos' great novels is *Pobre Negro.* Borrowing his sentiments, one could envision a great novel entitled "*Pobre Criollo.*" Such a novel would combine the social and economic features of *The Grapes of Wrath*, of *Tobacco Road* and of *Tortilla Flat.* This is by way of saying that the Venezuelan—the native-born of long standing; the *mestizo*, the *pardo*, and the "poor white"—is predominantly a displaced person socially and economically and, frequently, physically. True, there is a privileged upper class of Venezuelans that is made up of "whites" and of a few *mestizos-pardos*, but there is also a sharp line of decline when the socio-economic status of the *mestizo-pardo* is assumed. The Venezuelan *criollo* is a tremendously disadvantaged person in his own land.

Comment has been made already of how the foreign-born constitute the preponderance of the working force in jobs involving some degree of skill and knowledge, how business enterprises are dominated by the non-*criollo*. This is no criticism of the foreign-born or of the immigration policies of the governments. It is simply a way of documenting the failure of Venezuelan education—the schools just have not prepared the *venezolano* to participate effectively, to compete successfully, in the nation's economic life. This is the basic challenge to those who would reform Venezuelan education. This, too, is the area to watch as the nation's political future unfolds. Disadvantaged masses, ignorant masses, or disadvantaged masses which have been subjected to unrealistic education, can become irresponsible masses. Political stability, economic responsibility and social progress, cannot be built with confidence upon such a foundation.

It is on this note of concern for the future of the *criollo* that this report is brought to an end. This concern stems from an unshakeable conviction as to the worthiness of the *criollo's* potential, and from sincere admiration for him and for his culture. It stems, too, from the recognition that the Venezuelan school is *his* school, and that it should do justice to that fact and truly meet his needs. Venezuela is a beautiful and rich land, and one that has much to offer to her people and to the world. The school should capacitate the *criollo* to realize on this potential of beauty and of wealth, to bring to full fruition the promise of this land of orchids and black gold.

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